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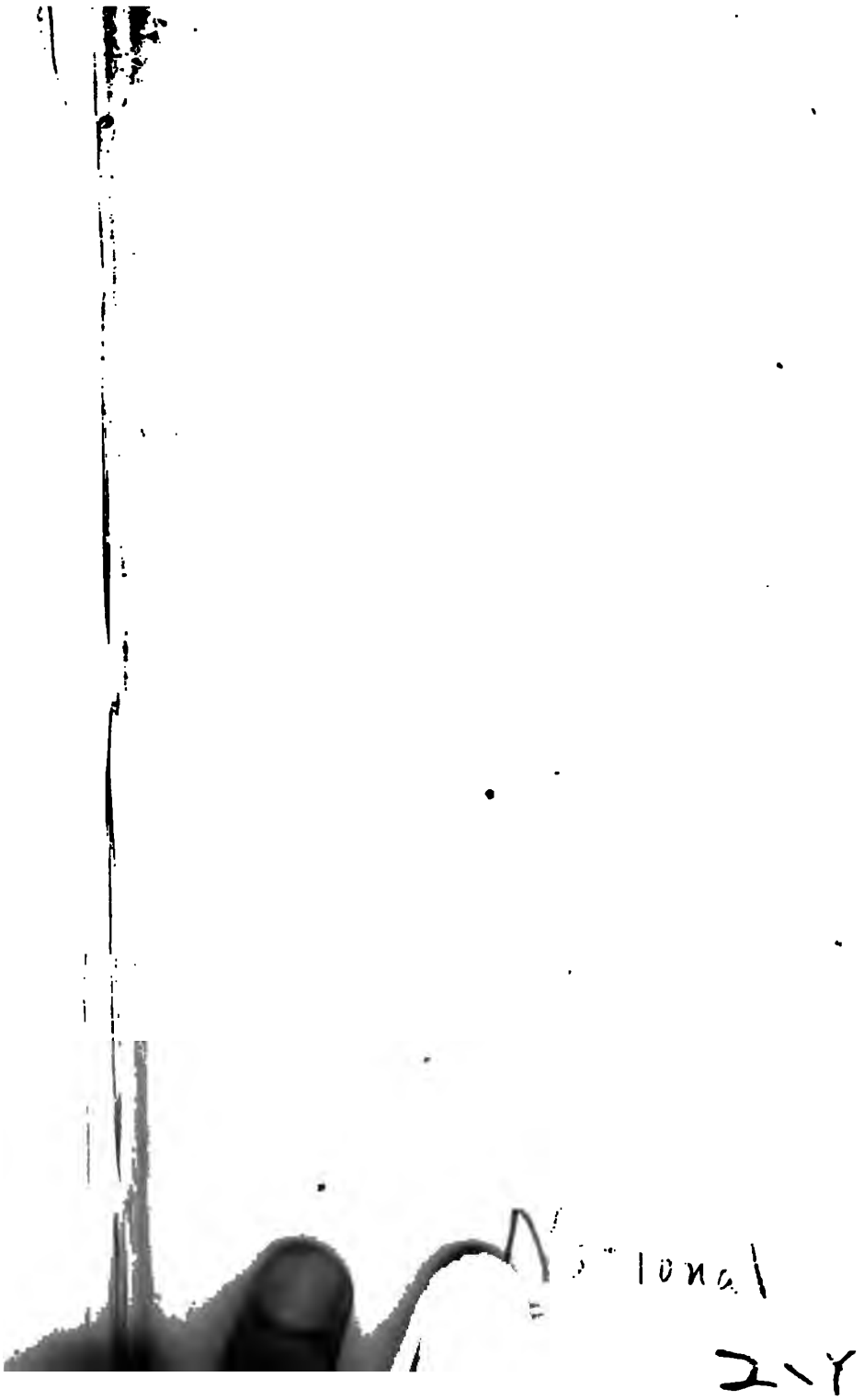

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

ORIGINAL—MONTHLY.

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

EDITED BY REV. W. H. BIDWELL.

VOL. XV.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED—BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL.

1841.

THE NEW YORK
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2139 (D)
ASTOR, LENOX AND
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THE NATIONAL PREACHER.

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THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 1. Vol. XV.) JANUARY, 1841. (Whole No. 169.

SERMON CCXCI.

BY REV. ALBERT BARNES,
PHILADELPHIA.

REVIVALS OF RELIGION IN CITIES AND LARGE TOWNS.

No. 1. THE THEORY OF REVIVALS.

"*Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together.*"—Isa. 45 : 8.

This beautiful passage of Scripture may be regarded partly as the expression of pious feeling, and partly as a prophetic description. It is the language of one who greatly desired an increase of piety, and who was accustomed to look forward to times when pure religion would shed abroad its influence on earth like descending showers from heaven. This prophet, more than any other one, fixed his eye on the times of the Redeemer, and he delighted to describe scenes which would occur when he should appear. With deep interest he threw himself amidst those future scenes, and with a heart full of faith he uttered the language of our text, 'Pour down, ye heavens, from above like descending showers, and ye skies distil righteousness like fertilizing rains; let the earth open her bosom, and let salvation spring forth as an abundant harvest.'

From these words I propose to commence a series of discourses on REVIVALS OF RELIGION. Several considerations have induced me to enter on the discussion of this subject. One is, that they are the most remarkable phenomena of our times, and that they have done more than any other single cause to form the public mind in this country. Large portions of the community have been shaken to their centre by these religious move-

ments; and society has received some of its most decided directions from these deep and far-pervading revolutions.

Another reason is, that every christian has the deepest interest in the question about revivals of religion. If they are the genuine work of God; if they accord with the statements in the Bible; if they are such results as he has a right to expect under the preaching of the Gospel, he is bound, by all the love which he bears to his Saviour and to the souls of men, to desire and pray for their increase and extension.

Another reason is, that there are many various and contradictory opinions in regard to these religious movements. It is not wonderful that, in a community where every thing is subjected to free discussion, and every man is at liberty to form his own judgment, they should have given rise to great variety of opinion. By some they are regarded as the mere work of enthusiasm. By some they are supposed to be originated by a strain of preaching, and an array of measures adapted to operate on easily excited feelings, and fitted to influence only the weaker portions of the community, and to be unworthy the attention of the more refined and intelligent ranks of society. By others they are considered to be in accordance with all the laws of mind; regarded as having a foundation in the very nature of christianity in its adaptedness to the world; as produced by the agency of the Holy Spirit, and as connected with the best hopes of mankind. Even among professed christians it cannot be denied that some look upon them with distrust and alarm: others regard them as the glory of the age, and as identified with all that is cheering in the prospect of the conversion of the world to God. Some see in them the last hope of this republic against a tide of ills that is rolling in with rapid and desolating surges upon us; and some regard them as among the ills which religion, unsupported by the state, has produced in a country where all is wild, and free even to licentiousness. Perhaps there is scarcely any excitement of the public mind that has produced deeper attention; none that can by a christian or a patriot be regarded as of higher moment, or as more likely to affect the best interests of man. The friend of revivals regards it as a fact of deep interest, that scarcely a village smiles upon the American landscape that has not been consecrated in its early history by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost in a revival of religion. He discerns in the spire that points to heaven, proof that that is a place perhaps more than once honored by the presence of Israel's God. He sees in the reigning order, peace, and prosperity, proofs that the power of God has been felt there. He finds in its schools, its industry, its morals, its benevolence, demonstration that christianity there struck its roots deep in some mighty work of God's Spirit, and, as the result, is sending out branches bending with rich and mellow fruits. He can recall there some thrilling period in its history when a spirit of prayer and seriousness gave its character to the

growing village, and when, under the influence of such a revival, a moulding hand was extended over all the social habits of the place. If such is their influence, it is an act of mere justice that christianity should not be deprived of the claims which it has on the gratitude of the nation; it is a duty which we owe to ourselves and our country to understand and to appreciate causes so deeply affecting our welfare.

There is one other reason why I propose to bring this subject before you, and indeed the main reason which has operated on my mind in doing it. It is whether it is to be expected that such scenes will be witnessed in large cities and towns, or whether there are in the very nature of a city population insuperable obstacles to the existence of revivals of religion there. It is certain that in our own land they have occurred much more frequently in the comparatively quiet retreats of the country; and that such scenes as are characteristically known as revivals of religion are scarcely known in large cities like the one where we dwell. Knowing as we do the effect which cities must have, and do have, on the religion, the chastity, the temperance, the intelligence, and the liberty of a nation; and knowing as we do the ten thousand obstacles which exist there to the promotion of true religion, it is a question of deep interest whether christians are to expect now, in such places, scenes like that on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. It is with main reference to this inquiry that I have commenced this course of lectures; and my general plan will be to state the nature of a revival of religion; to consider the relation of revivals to this country; to show the importance of promoting religion in cities; to show what is the general character of cities with particular reference to this inquiry; to consider whether revivals may be expected to occur in cities; and to show the desirableness of such works of grace there.

The following things will express what is meant by a revival of religion; or the following truths are essential elements in the theory of such a revival:

1. There may be a radical and permanent change in a man's mind on the subject of religion. This change it is customary to express by the word regeneration, or the new birth. It supposes that, before this, man is entirely alienated from God, and that he first begins to love him when he experiences this change. The previous state is one of sin. The subsequent is a state of holiness. The former is death; the latter is life. The former is the agitation of a troubled sea, which cannot rest; the latter calmness, peace, joy. This change is the most thorough through which the human mind ever passes. It effects a complete revolution in the man, and his opposite states are characterized by words that express no other states in the human mind. This change is instantaneous. The exact moment may not be known; and the previous seriousness and anxiety may be of longer or shorter continuance; but there *is* a moment when the heart is changed,

and when the man that was characteristically a sinner becomes characteristically a christian. This change is always attended with feeling. The man is awakened to a sense of his danger; feels with more or less intensity that he is a sinner; resolves to abandon his sins and seek for pardon; is agitated with conflicts of greater or less intensity on giving up his sins; finds greater or feebler obstacles in his way; and at last resolves to cast himself on the mercy of God in the Redeemer, and to become a christian. The result is, in all cases, permanent peace and joy. It is the peace of the soul when pardon is pronounced on the guilty, and when the hope of immortal glory first dawns on a benighted mind. It may be beautifully illustrated by the loveliness of the landscape when the sun at evening breaks out after a tempest; or by the calmness of the ocean as it subsides after the storm. In the fact that such a change may occur all christians agree; in such a change is laid the whole theory of a revival of religion. Let many sinners simultaneously turn to God. Let conversions to Christ, instead of being few and far between, become numerous, rapidly occurring, and decided in their character, and you have all that is usually meant when we speak of *revivals*, so far as *conversions* are concerned. Still these are all individual conversions, accomplished in each case by the Holy Spirit, and in exact accordance with the design of the Gospel, and evincing its glory. Each one is converted in the same way, by the same truth, by the same great agent, the Holy Spirit, as though he were alone, and not another mind had been awakened or converted. It is the conversion of a number of *individuals* from sin to holiness, and from Satan unto God. Look on the heavens in a clear night, and you will have an illustration of what we mean. The stars that are set in that broad zone of light which stretches over the firmament—the milky way—are single stars, each subject to its own laws, moving in its own sphere, glorious, probably, in its own array of satellites; but their rays meet and mingle—not less beautiful because the light of millions is blended together. Alone, they all show God's power and wisdom; blended, they evince the same power and wisdom when he groups beauties and wonders into one. So in conversion from sin to God. Take the case of a single true conversion to God, and extend it to a community—to *many* individuals passing through that change, and you have all the theory of a revival of religion. It is bringing together many conversions; arresting simultaneously many minds; perhaps condensing into a single place, and into a few weeks, the ordinary work of many distant places and many years. The essential fact is, that a sinner may be converted by the agency of the Spirit of God from his sins. The same power which changes him, *may* change others also. Let substantially the same views, and feelings, and changes which exist in the case of the individual, exist in the case of others; let a deep seriousness pervade a community, and a spirit of prayer be

diffused there; let the ordinary haunts of pleasure and vice be forsaken for the places of devotion, and you have the theory, so far as I know, of a revival of religion.

2. The second fact is, that there may be times in the life of a christian of unusual peace and joy. To whatever it may be owing, it will be assumed as a fact—for the truth of which I now depend on an appeal to the christian's own feelings—that there *are* times in his life of far more than usual elevation in piety; times, when his "peace is like a river," and his love to God and man "like the waves of the sea." There are times when he feels an irresistible longing for communion with God; when the breath of praise is sweet; when every thing seems to be full of God; when all his feelings prompt him to devotion; and when he becomes so impressed with the great truths of christianity, and filled with the hope of heaven, that he desires to live only for God and for the skies. Earthly objects lose their lustre in his view; their brightest, gayest colors fade away; and an insatiable panting of soul leads him away from these to hold communion with the Redeemer. A light, pure, tranquil, constant, is shed on all the truths of religion, and the desire of the salvation of children, partners, parents, friends, of the church and of the world, enchains all the affections. Then to pray is easy, and to converse with christians and with sinners is easy, and the prospect of boundless wealth and of the brightest honors would be gladly exchanged for the privilege of converting and saving a single soul.

When this occurs in a church, and these feelings pervade any considerable portion of the people of God, there is a revival of religion so far as the church is concerned. Let christians as a body live manifestly under the influence of their religion; let a feeling of devotion pervade a whole church, such as you have felt in the favored times of your piety, and there would be a revival of religion—a work of grace that would soon extend to other minds, and catch, like spreading fires, on the altars of other hearts. Let a christian community feel on the great subjects of religion what individual christians sometimes feel, and should *always* feel, and, so far as the church is concerned, there would be all the phenomena that exist in a revival of religion. A revival in the church is a revival in individual hearts—and nothing more. It is when each individual christian becomes more sensible of his obligations, more prayerful, more holy, and more anxious for the salvation of men. Let every professing christian awake to what he should be, and come under the full influence of his religion, and in such a church there would be a revival. Such a sense of obligation, and such joy, and peace, and love, and zeal in the individual members of a church *would be a revival.* But in the most earnest desires for your own salvation there is no violation of any of the proper laws of christian action. In great, strenuous, and combined efforts for the salvation of others, in unceasing

prayer for the redemption of all the world, there is no departure from the precepts of Christ, nor from the Spirit which he manifested on earth.

3. The third feature that occurs in a revival of religion to which it is proper to direct your attention is, that an extensive influence goes over a community, and affects with seriousness many who are not ultimately converted to God. Many individuals are usually made serious; many gay and worldly amusements are suspended; many persons, not accustomed to go to the place of prayer, are led to the sanctuary; many formerly indifferent to religion, or opposed to it, are now willing to converse on it; many perhaps are led to pray in secret and to read the Bible, who before had wholly neglected the means of grace. Many who never enter into the kingdom of God seem to be just on its borders, and hesitate long whether they shall give up the world and become christians, or whether they shall give up their serious impressions and return to their former indifference and sins. The subsiding of a revival, or the dying zeal of christians, or some powerful temptation, or a strong returning tide of worldliness and vanity, leave many such persons still with the world, and their serious impressions vanish—perhaps to return no more.

4. It remains only to be added as an essential feature in a revival, that it is produced by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not the work of man, however human agency may be employed. Imperfections there may be, and things to regret there may be—as in all that man touches there is—but the phenomenon itself we regard as the work of the Holy Ghost, alike beyond human power to produce it and to control it. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth;" and such is the work of the Spirit, alike in an individual conversion or in a revival of religion. The wind, sometimes gentle, sometimes terrific, sometimes sufficient only to bend the heads of the field of wheat, or to shake the leaf of the aspen, sometimes sweeping in the fury of the storm over hills and vales, illustrates the way in which God's Spirit influences human hearts. You have seen the pliant osier bend gently before the zephyr, and the flowers and the fields of grain gently wave in a summer's eve. So gently does the Spirit of God breathe upon a church and people. So calm, so lovely, so pure are those influences which incline the mind to prayer, to thought, to Christ, to heaven. You have seen the clouds grow dark in the western sky. They roll upward and onward, infolding on themselves, and throwing their ample volumes over the heavens. The lightnings play, and the thunder rolls, and the tornado sweeps over hills and vales, and the proud oak crashes on the mountains. "The wind blows where it pleases;" and thus, too, the Spirit of God passes with more than human power over a community, and many a stout-hearted sinner, like the quivering elm or oak, trembles under

the influences of truth. *They* see a dark cloud gathering in the sky; they hear the thunder of justice; they see the heavens flash along their guilty path; and they are prostrated before God, like the forest before the mighty tempest. The storm passes by, and the sun rides serene again in the heavens, and universal nature smiles—beautiful emblem of the effect of a revival of religion.

Such is a brief description of what actually occurs. I shall now proceed to show that these phenomena are such as we have reason to expect from the manner in which the human mind is constituted, and society organized.

I first call your attention to the manner in which society is constituted, and to the inquiry whether such a work of grace is in any way adapted to its original laws and propensities. The idea which I wish to illustrate is, that *God has adapted society to be moved simultaneously by common interests.* He *might* have made the world differently. He might have peopled it with independent individuals—bound together by no common sympathies, cheered by no common joys, impelled to effort by no common wants. All that is tender in parental and filial affection; all that is mild, bland, purifying in mutual love; all that is elevating in sympathetic sorrow and joy; all that is great and ennobling in the love of the species, might have been unknown. Isolated individuals, though surrounded by thousands, there might have been no cord to bind us to the living world, and we might have wept alone, rejoiced alone, died alone. The sun might have shed his beams on us in our solitary rambles, and not a mortal have felt an interest in our bliss or wo. Each melancholy individual might have lived unbenefitted by the existence of any other, and with no one to shed a tear on the bed of moss, when in disease he would lie down, and when he would die.

But this is not the way in which God has chosen to fit up the world. He has made the race one great brotherhood, and each one has some interest in the obscurest man that lives, in the wildest barbarian that seeks a shelter beneath a rock, or that finds a home in a cave. Pierce their veins. The same purple fluid meanders there. Analyse their feelings. Unknown to each other, they weep over the same distress; strangers in other things, they mingle their efforts to save the same fellow-mortal from death. This great common brotherhood God has broken up into communities of nations, tribes, clans, families—each with its own sets of sympathies, with peculiar interests, with peculiar sorrows and joys. One design of this is to divide our sorrows; another to double our joys; another to perpetuate and to spread just sentiments—to diffuse rapidly all that will meliorate the condition of the race. Sorrow hath not half its pangs when you can mingle your tears with those of a sister or a wife; and joy has not diffused half its blessings until *your* joy has lighted up the countenance of another—be it a son, a father, or even a stranger.

Now there was no way conceivable in which just sentiments and feelings could be so rapidly spread as by this very organization. Susceptible as it is, like every thing else, of being perverted to evil purposes, yet still it is stronger in favor of virtue than of vice, of religion than of irreligion. We appeal, then, to this organization, and maintain that the way to propagate and secure just sentiments in a community is to appeal to common sympathies and common feelings. If you wish to spread any opinions and principles, you will not do it by appealing to individuals *as such*, you will call to your aid the power of the social organization. You will rouse men by their common attachment to country; you will remind them of dear-bought liberty; you will lay before them their common dangers; you will awaken a *common* feeling, and endeavor to lead them forth to the martial field together. When danger presses, you will strike a cord that shall vibrate in every heart, and you will expect sympathy, concert, united action. I have seen during the last few years a common sympathy extend through all the commercial world. I have seen the merchants of our cities and towns agitated by a common apprehension of danger, and their hearts vibrating with a common emotion, from Bangor to New Orleans. I ask why there may not be as deep common feeling on the subject of religion? I have seen during the past few months this whole community agitated on the eve of a pending election. Two great parties, vigilant, active, energetic, fired with the hopes of victory, and each feeling that the destiny of the nation depended on the result, were arrayed against each other. Committees were appointed to make arrangements; public meetings were held, and the flagging faith and zeal of vast assemblies were roused by appeals to patriotism and the love of country or of party; names were registered, and the sentiments of every man were ascertained, and the whole community was roused in the exciting struggle. Every man felt himself at liberty, or called on in duty, to speak to his neighbor, to sound his sentiments, and to endeavor to bring him to the polls. I blame not this zeal,—but I refer to it to ask why the same zeal and interest should be deemed improper on the subject of religion? Assuredly not because it is less important, or because it is less proper to propagate great and noble sentiments by an appeal to the common feelings of men. Let the same zeal and ardor be manifest in religion; let the churches evince the same anxiety for the honor of their Lord and Redeemer, and for his ascendency in the hearts of men, which political organizations have done; or even let the members of the churches in this land be warmed with the same solicitude for the prevalence of religion which *they* have shown for the triumph of their party, and, I was about to say, it would be all that we could pray for in a revival of religion. Certainly, after what our eyes have seen during the last year, no one should ever blame the ardor and zeal of the friends of Christ, or object against men's being simultaneously excited and moved on the

subject of religion. Not till the zeal of christians approaches in some measure this political zeal, and not till the anxiety of men to save their souls becomes something like the anxiety to secure the election of a favorite candidate, should the note of opposition be heard against revivals of religion.—So I see, in the history of the past, the dying spark of freedom often kindled to a flame, and liberty come out of great common public excitement. Thought rouses thought, and mind acts on mind, and truth presses on truth, till a country is roused and its great interests are safe.. In time of danger, I see men with common feelings rush to the standard of freedom. The plough is left in the furrow; and the counting-house is forsaken; and the ship is moored to the wharf; and the tools of the mechanic are dropped; and the places of amusement are closed; and home is abandoned; and the hold on gold is loosed; and men of affluence seize the sword; and the professions yield up their men of talents to take the place at the head of armies; and the earth trembles under the mighty tread of the advancing legions—for the great common interests of a nation are in danger. Then deeds of self-denial become the theme of the eloquent, and the names of these men are given in charge to history, to be transmitted to future times.

I speak not of this to blame it. I ask only, why should not religion be expected to be extended and perpetuated by some such appeals to the common feelings and sympathies of men? But if so, there would be a revival of religion.

In further illustration of this, I observe, that however solitary and dissocial infidelity may be, this is not the nature of christianity. Infidelity may appeal to no sympathies and no common hopes, but this is not the nature of the christian religion. Infidelity may have no power to increase the tenderness of attachment, to purify friendship, to bind the cords of love more closely; but it is not so with christianity. Infidelity has always loved to snap the cords of social life rudely asunder, but christianity has loved to make stronger those silken ties, and to deepen all the tender sympathies of the heart. There is not one of the sympathies of our nature that christianity does not make more tender, not one of the social affections that it does not design to strengthen and to purify. It aims to sanctify all that is social, kind, and tender in men.

I know the objection that is brought against revivals, that they are the work of sympathy alone. But I am yet to understand why religion is to spread through the world by denying it the aid of the social sympathies, and of those tender feelings which facilitate the propagation of other just opinions and feelings. I am yet to learn, when the flame of patriotism is made to burn more pure and bright by appealing to all that is tender and sympathetic in our nature, why *religion* is to be regarded as suspicious and tarnished because the pleadings of a father or mother, or the tears of a sister have been the occasion, though

amidst deep excitement, of directing the thoughts to eternity. To me it seems there is a peculiar loveliness in the spread of religion in this way; and I love to contemplate christianity calling to its aid whatever of tenderness, kindness, and love there may be existing in the bosom of fallen and erring man. These sympathies are the precious remains of the joys of paradise lost; they may be made invaluable aids in the work of securing paradise again. They serve to distinguish man, though fallen, from the dissocial and unsympathising apostacy of beings of pure malignancy in hell, and their existence in man *may* have been one of the reasons why *he* was selected for redemption, while fallen angels were passed by in their sins. On no subject have we so many common interests at stake as in religion. I look upon a family circle. What tender feelings! What mutual love! What common joys! What united sorrows! The blow that strikes one member strikes all. The joy that lights up one countenance, diffuses its smiles over all. Together they kneel by the side of the one that is sick; together they rejoice at his recovery; or they bow their heads and weep when he dies, and put on the same sad habiliments of grief and walk to his grave. Nor are these all their common joys and woes. They are plunged into the same guilt and danger. They are together under the fearful visitations of that curse which has travelled down from the first apostacy of man. They are going to a common abode beneath the ground. And that guilty and suffering circle, too, *may be*, irradiated with the same beams of hope, and the same balm of Gilead, and the same great Physician, may impart healing there. Now we ask why may they not become christians together? Sunk in the same woes, why may they not rise to the same immortal hope? When one member is awakened, why should not the same feeling run through the united group? When one is impressed with the great thoughts of immortality, why should not the same thoughts weigh on each spirit? And when the eyes of one kindle with the hope of eternal life, why should not every eye catch the immortal radiance, and every heart be filled with the hope of heaven? And why may we not appeal to them by all the hopes of sitting down together in a world of bliss, and by all the fears of being separated to different destinies in an eternal heaven or hell? And yet let this feeling go through this family, and produce its appropriate results, and there would be a revival of religion.

The truth is, there are no sympathies so deep on any other subject as on the subject of religion. The sympathies of the human heart are never met and satisfied, till they are met by religion. The hopes, the fears, the joys of man never find a corresponding object till he looks away from time and is filled with the hope of heaven. That aged man, once full of hope in the cheerful visions of early life, now sits down and weeps, that in all life's ambition, its honors, and its joys, he has never realized what he anticipated. The big tear rolls down his cheek, worn

with age and care, when he remembers how the world has flattered and betrayed him; and there he sits at the close of life on the borders of a boundless ocean, waiting to be borne to some land of bliss which he has never yet found. He has had sympathies, hopes, fears, anticipations, which have never been satisfied by this world, which nothing now can satisfy, until the eye is fixed on immortality, and he can look to a heaven of boundless glory as his home. That family so tender, so amiable, so lovely, so united in sorrows and in joys, has sympathetic emotions which can never be met but by the united hope of heaven. Never will they know the richness of pure attachment to each other until they are united in the service of God, and can look forward to the same heaven as their home. Never will their sorrows produce what they should produce, or their joys be followed with the blessings which they should convey, until all their sympathies are sanctified by the Gospel of peace, and parents and children alike hope to strike together the harp of praise in heaven. So society every where is full of anticipations, sympathies, and hopes, that are never fully met until a tide of religious feeling flows over the community, uniting many hearts simultaneously in the hope of heaven.

In conclusion I would observe, that if the views which have now been presented are correct, you will accord with me in the sentiment, that such a work should be an object of the fervent prayer of every friend of the Saviour. If, then, you have ever felt in your own hearts the power of divine grace; if you have ever felt the worth of the soul; if you have felt that you are soon to meet your fellow-mortals at the judgment-seat; if you have any love for your children and friends, for the church and the world, for the thoughtless multitudes amidst whom we dwell, let me entreat you to cry unto God without ceasing FOR A REVIVAL OF PURE RELIGION.

SERMON CCXCII.

BY REV. ALBERT BARNES.

No. 2. VINDICATION OF REVIVALS, AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THIS COUNTRY.

"*Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together.*"—Isaiah, 45 : 8.

In resuming the subject discussed in my last discourse, I propose to submit some additional considerations, adapted to show the nature of revivals of religion, and to vindicate them from objections.

My general aim will be to show that they are the regular and proper result of the means which God is employing; that they are promised in the Bible as invaluable blessings; and that their value has been evinced by their effects in the history of the church, and especially by the history of our own country. This will be attempted in a series of propositions, which will be intended as a continuance of those which were offered in my last discourse.

I. My first remark is, that the dealings of God in his providence are fitted to produce revivals of religion. The phenomenon which I am endeavoring to describe, you will recollect, is the *simultaneous conversion of many souls to Christ*, and a rapid advance in promoting the purity and zeal of christians. The question now is, whether there is any thing in the dealings of Providence which is fitted, if a proper impression were made, to produce this result.

Let me for one moment refer you to facts which are constantly passing before your eyes. Here falls, struck down by the hand of an unseen God, some endeared member of a family—a father, a brother, a sister, or a mother. What is the effect? There is a common lamentation around the dying bed of the friend, and a united, sad, and slow procession to the tomb. There is a sundering at once of many ties; a common feeling in view of a common loss; and together they bow the head and weep. The attention of the whole group is turned away from scenes of vanity, gain, and ambition; a palsying blow is laid on half the comforts of life, and the weeping group sit down in sackcloth and ashes. The theatre, the ball-room, and the splendid party are forsaken; and gloom is spread over the counting-room, and the man leaves the scene of his domestic grief reluctantly to go there. He has no heart now for amusement or pleasure, or even for the usual much-loved scenes of his business and ambition. God has for a time sundered the tie which bound the united group to the living world, and has made an awful chasm in their circle.

Does this affect a solitary individual? No. It affects a community. Is it designed to be the whole effect of this affliction to produce grief? Too well we know the purposes of that benevolent Father who has caused these tears, to believe this. It is to arrest the attention, and direct it to better things—to God, to Christ, to heaven. It is to lead to reflection on sin, and death, and the judgment, and eternity. It is to admonish all the weeping group to prepare to die. The scene is *fitted* to lead to a serious life, to religion, to God. But is it fitted to make one only a christian—is it an appeal to solitary, independent emotions? No. It extends to the total group. And if a suitable impression were made by it on all, it would lead them together to the Saviour. Yet here would be all the elements of a revival of religion; and here is an event fitted to lead a *community* up to God.

So, when pestilence spreads among a people, and thousands die; so, when famine is abroad on the earth, there is an appeal made to *communities;* and the thoughts of men, if any suitable im-

pression were made, would be directed to God and to a better world. So—to change the theme—the earth renewed in spring-time; the fresh proofs of the goodness of God; the bounties of his hand—new every morning, repeated every evening—all are fitted to lead men to God, and are an appeal to them as *communities*. And there is neither a judgment of the Almighty, nor a blessing that comes from our great Father's hand, that is not fitted to impress *communities* with the importance of religion, and to lead alienated, social man, back to God. Thus, threatened ruin roused Nineveh to repentance; and thus God visits the earth alike with judgment and mercy, to rouse the attention of communities, and direct their thoughts to eternity and to heaven.

II. But whatever may be said of providential dealings, one thing is clear—the *truth* of God is adapted to promote revivals of religion. That great system of glorious doctrines which constitutes "the everlasting Gospel," is adapted to produce every where such works of grace among men. It began its career in a glorious revival of religion on the day of Pentecost. It showed its power of moving communities, and especially the communities made up of cities and large towns, in Jerusalem, in Samaria, in Antioch, in Ephesus, in Corinth, in Rome. The Gospel was propagated at first by a succession of most signal works of grace, carried on alike among the most degraded and the most refined portions of mankind; and it has continued, as we shall yet see, to extend its power and influence mainly in this manner.

Even now, if the truths of the Bible were applied by the Spirit of God to the hearts of the people in this house, the scenes of the day of Pentecost would be renewed here. If that same truth were applied, as it might be, to the inhabitants of our great cities, the interesting, though deeply agitating scenes which occurred in Jerusalem and in Ephesus, would be renewed in Philadelphia, in New-York, in Boston, in New Orleans. Should the great truths affecting your welfare, my hearers, now put forth their power; should every one here feel as he should feel in view of the reality of his situation, a deep solemnity would come over this house, and there would be a simultaneous rushing to the cross; a burst of feeling in every part of this house, like that which agitated the bosom of the jailer at Philippi, when he said, "What *must* I do to be saved?" Recall a few of those truths. You are sinners—sinners deeply depraved, and under the condemning sentence of a most holy but violated law. What if every man, and woman, and child here should feel this. What deep emotion would agitate their bosoms! What anxiety would be depicted on every countenance! How would the now roving eye be fixed in solemn thought, and the now gay and thoughtless heart prompt the deep inquiry, What is to be my doom? Yet this is just such a scene as occurs in a revival of religion.

Again: You will die—all, all die. You will die soon. You have but few more plans to form and execute, or more probably

to leave half-executed or but just commenced—before you will die—inevitably die. Were this truth felt by all, what emotion would there be in this room! What bosom but would swell with the anxious inquiry, what *is it* to die; and what must I do to be prepared for death? Yet here would be such a scene as occurs in a revival of religion. Another truth. You will go to another world. You will stand at the bar of God. You will give a solemn account for all the deeds done in the body. You will bow with willing or constrained submission to the eternal doom pronounced on men by Jesus Christ. You will go from that tribunal to heaven or to hell. Perhaps in a week, a day, an hour, you may know fully what is meant by those mysterious and awful words, death, judgment, eternity—what *it is* to die, and to stand before God. And can any one doubt that if all here felt the force of these truths, there would be a simultaneous impression on the subject of religion, and hundreds of voices here crying out, "What must we do to be saved?" These truths are in their nature fitted not to impress one, but all; not to lead one only to prepare to meet God, but to conduct all at the same time to the throne of mercy. Yet here would be a revival of religion. And why should it not be so? What law of our nature, or of christianity, is violated when such scenes occur? We have sinned together; and why should we not arise together and seek forgiveness? We are travelling together to the grave and to the judgment-bar; why should we not resolve to go together to heaven? The same Redeemer has died for us all, and why should we not together seek for pardon through his blood? We shall lie in a common grave, mingle with the same dust of the valley, hear the sound of the same trumpet of the archangel in the day of judgment; and why should we not feel a common interest in such scenes now, and gather around the same cross, and lay hold together on eternal life? If it be reasonable for an individual to do it, why not for many—for all? Why should not the common feeling go from heart to heart, and *all* resolve by the grace of God to secure the salvation of the soul? What law of our nature would be violated should this be done? Yet here would be all the phenomena of a revival of religion.

III. In the third place, there are evils of sin in all communities which can be overcome only by such influences as attend a revival of religion. I refer to evils of alliance; of compact; of confederation; the sins of association and of common pursuit, where one man keeps another in countenance, or one man leads on the many to transgression. Sin is never, perhaps, solitary. One sin is interlocked with others, and is sustained by others. This is especially the case when the world becomes gay and giddy; when the ordinary means of grace fail to make an impression; when luxury spreads its temptations over a community; when the public mind becomes intent on gain; when political strife rages throughout a community; or when some bold and daring allurement of vice engrosses the public mind, and the laws of God and man are

alike set at defiance. Such scenes occur peculiarly in cities and large towns. Rarely is it here that one form of iniquity stands by itself: it is interlocked with others. Such combinations of evil can be met only by the power that goes forth in a revival of religion. To meet it and overcome it is beyond the power of man, and beyond the ordinary influences even of the Spirit of God. The only resource of the church, then, is in the right arm of the Most High, and in the power which God displays when hundreds are made to bow simultaneously to the Son of God.

Thus it has usually been in the world. When some chieftain of wickedness has collected a clan of evil-doers; when infidelity has marshaled its forces; when vice and crime triumph in a community, then the church has lifted its voice of prayer, and God has heard its supplications, and has poured down righteousness like the rain, and the desolate world has been made to smile under the influence of truth and salvation. The Gospel of Christ is fitted to meet all those combined evils; and is invested with a power that can disarm every chieftain of wickedness, and break up every combination of evil, and convert the gay and thoughtless multitudes to God. But it is the Gospel only when it puts forth its most mighty energies. It is the power of God evinced when the church is roused, and when combined efforts to save souls are opposed to combined energies of evil; when the church rises in its strength, and with one voice calls upon God, and with one heart engages in the work of the salvation of men. And it is a truth which cannot be too deeply impressed on the heart of each christian—a truth, alas! too often forgotten—that the only power in the wide universe which can meet and overcome such combined evil, is the power of the Spirit of God. There are evils of alliance and confederation in every city, which can *never* be met but by a general revival of religion. There are evils in all our churches which can never be removed but by such a work of grace. There are thousands of the young of both sexes to whom we have no access, and who CAN never be reached but by the Spirit of God descending on them with almighty power—a power that goes forth only when the church is greatly impressed with a sense of existing evils, and when it comes with fervent entreaty to a throne of grace to ask the interposition of the Almighty arm. In ordinary times, the world, especially in cities, presents such scenes as these. None pursues a solitary, scarcely any one an independent course of evil. One form of sin is interwoven with another; one countenances another; one leads on another; and all stand opposed with solid front to the Gospel of Christ. The world is arrayed in hostility against God; and not even on the flanks of the immense army can an impression be made; scarce a straggler can be found who can be brought under the influence of the Gospel. Meantime the church slumbers; the mass of professing christians feel no concern; and if here and there an active christian is seen, his efforts are solitary and unaided; he is without counsel or concert with others; and he makes no

impression on the combined evil around him. In such scenes we are not to wonder that sin triumphs, and that the world moves on undisturbed to death.

Thus far the argument has been to show that revivals of religion are not inconsistent with the laws of the social organization and of the human mind. I shall now change the course of the argument, and adduce illustrations from other sources.

IV. I make my appeal, in the fourth place, to that argument with which, perhaps, I should have commenced—the testimony of the Bible. The question is, whether the Scriptures speak of such scenes as are known in modern revivals of religion as to be expected under the influence of the Gospel of Christ. I cannot go at length into this part of the argument; but I will group together, first, a collection of passages of Scripture chiefly from one prophet, to show how *he* felt on the subject, and what were the views which he entertained of the effects of the true religion when the Messiah should have come. I refer to Isaiah. "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together." So the *effect* of such a work of grace is described in a song of praise in the mouth of the church. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." Ch. 61: 10, 11. Who hath not seen the beautiful effect on the dry and parched earth of refreshing summer showers? Such effects, the prophet said, would be witnessed under the Gospel; such effects have been witnessed in hundreds of the towns and villages of our own land. Listen to another description of such a work of grace—a description which seems to be a beautiful prophetic record of what has occurred often even in our own times. It is the language of God himself. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Ch. 44: 3–5. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth." 55: 10, 11. Such descriptions were the prophetic visions of future times; descriptions of what has since occurred as unerring as were those which foretold the doom of Babylon,

of Tyre, of Idumea, from the lips of the same prophet. And as the words of that singularly endowed and favored prophet are now the *best possible* to describe the condition of Babylon and Idumea, so they are still the best which can be selected to describe a revival of religion.

But it was not in general language, or by one prophet only that such scenes were foretold. There was one prophet in general much less favored with a view of future times than Isaiah, that was signally favored in regard to the scenes evinced in a revival of religion. I allude to the prophet Joel. In the following glowing language he describes what we *know* on the best authority was designed to be a description of the work of the Holy Ghost simultaneously affecting the hearts of many sinners. "And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." Joel, 2 : 28–32. This description is expressly applied by an apostle to the first great revival of religion that occurred after the ascension of the Saviour on the day of Pentecost. Acts, 2. On that memorable day, and in that memorable place, was the prototype and the exemplar of all true revivals of religion. I am aware that some have supposed that that whole scene was miraculous, and that it cannot be expected again to occur, since the days of miracles have ceased. But I am ignorant of the arguments which demonstrate that there was aught of miracle in this, except in the power of speaking in foreign languages, conferred on the apostles —a power which of itself converted no one of the three thousand who on that day gave their hearts to the Saviour. The power of speaking foreign languages had but two effects, one was, to furnish evidence that the religion was from God; the other, to enable them to make known its truths in the ears of the multitude assembled from different parts of the world. It was by the proper influence of TRUTH that the multitudes were alarmed and awakened; and why should not the same truth produce the same effect now? It was indeed by the power of God. But that same power is exerted in the conversion of every sinner; and why may it not now be employed in converting many simultaneously? It was indeed by the Holy Ghost; but no sinner is awakened or converted now without his power; and why may not that be exerted still on many as well as on one? The great fact in the case was, that several thousands were converted under the preaching of the truth

by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Miracles changed no one. The laws of mind were violated in the case of no one. No effect was produced which the *truth* was not adapted to produce. And why should not the same effect be again produced by the preaching of the same truth, and by the power of the same sacred Spirit?

Remember, also, that on scenes like this the heart of the Saviour was intently fixed. To prepare the way for this; to furnish truth that might be presented in times like this, he preached and toiled; to make it possible that scenes like this should be witnessed among men, he died; to secure the presence of the Holy Ghost in this manner, he ascended to heaven. "It is expedient for you," said he, "that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove, i. e. convince, the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John, 16: 7, 8. The Saviour did depart. He ascended to his native skies. His disciples waited for the promised blessing, at once the source of comfort to their disconsolate hearts, and the pledge that their Lord and Master had reached the courts of heaven. Fifty days after his resurrection—ten days only after his ascension, lo! the promised Spirit descended, and the conversion of three thousand in a single day, on the very spot where the hands of men had been just imbrued in the blood of the Lamb of God, and a part of whom had been concerned, doubtless, in enacting that horrid tragedy, showed that the human heart was under his control, and that the most wicked men, in one of the most guilty cities on the earth, might be simultaneously swayed and changed in a revival of religion.

Were there time, we might follow the apostles as they went forth from that place fresh from the presence of God, after having thus had a living demonstration of what the truth was fitted to effect on masses of mind. Let any one look at the record made respecting Samaria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, and he will see that the Gospel was propagated there amidst scenes that resemble, in all their essential features, modern revivals of religion. Indeed, there was no other way in which it could be done. The apostles never contemplated the conversion of solitary, isolated individuals. They expected to move *masses of mind, interlocked and confederated communities of sin*; AND IT WAS DONE.

V. I have reserved for a fifth argument or illustration, the state of things in our own country, to show by an appeal to facts here, the desirableness and the genuineness of such a work as I am endeavoring to describe. The question is, has the history of religion in our own land shed any light on the inquiry whether such effects are to be expected to attend the preaching of the Gospel, or whether it is desirable that christians should labor and pray that revivals may be witnessed in the cities, towns, villages, and hamlets of our republic? To us, and to the world at large, this is a deeply interesting question; for the fame of American revivals has crossed the ocean and reached the ears of our chris-

tian brethren beyond the waters, and their plans and labors are receiving direction from what their own travellers and our books report to them as the mode of maintaining religion here. And it is not too much to say, that on the purity of revivals here will depend the efforts of no small part of the protestant world, and that their influence will be felt at every missionary station on the globe. No one, therefore, can over-estimate the importance of just sentiments on this subject here.

For another reason it is important to know what is taught about the value of revivals in the history of our own country. In every thing pertaining to the welfare of man, other nations are looking with deep interest to our institutions. Statesmen are taking lessons from our history; the friends of freedom are exchanging congratulations on our prosperity; and the world stands in admiration of the vigor of our movements. Religion, too, has assumed new relations to the state. It is dissevered from civil institutions, and suffered to move by itself. On this our greatest, and in the eyes of other nations, our most hazardous experiment, that of committing religion to the blessing and patronage of its God and Saviour, the eye of the world is intently fixed. Hence foreigners speak with great interest of all things connected with religion here; and they speak of revivals as almost peculiar to our republic. Some have thought and spoken candidly of these scenes; but the great mass have ridiculed and caricatured them—"understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." Most foreign travellers have been as little qualified to speak of our religion as they have of our civil institutions. Most of them have never witnessed a revival of religion. Almost all have received their impressions from the enemies of revivals, and have characterized them as gross fanaticism and wildfire. They have gone and reported to the world abuses and disorders as the ordinary characteristics of such scenes; and the world has received its impression from such reports. Unhappily, it is one of the characteristics of our people to look to foreigners for an account of our own institutions; and many an American deems the record of such impartial foreigners of much more value than the testimony of his own eyes about what is occurring at his very door. Books distinguished for gross abuse of our religion and our country at large; books made to produce an impression across the ocean, and designedly filled with calumny, are here caught up, republished, placed in Athenæums, and on centre-tables, and become the authority for what exists in our own land and under our own eye. And I should not be surprised if a large part of the fashionable reading world—and in that appellation I include the fashionable reading christians of our cities and large towns—had formed their opinions of revivals in their own country from the testimony of such impartial and candid witnesses as the Trollopes, and the Fidlers, and the Martineaus of the old world; persons having as few qualifications for being correct reporters of revivals of religion as could be found in the wide world. Perhaps many

christians have yet to learn that such a historian of revivals as President Edwards ever lived. It is of great importance, therefore, to know exactly what place revivals have occupied in this land, and what has been their general character.

The history of religion in this country may be divided into four great periods, during which the influence of revivals would be seen to have exerted a moulding power on our institutions and our habits as a people.

1. The first period, of course, is that when our fathers came to these western shores. I speak here more particularly of those whose opinions have had so important an influence in forming the habits of the people of this land on religious subjects—the pilgrims of New England. The pilgrim was a wonderful man; and remarkable, among other things, for the place which religion, as well as science, occupied in his affections. In his eye, religion was the primary consideration. One of the first edifices that rose in the wilderness where he stationed himself was the house of God; near to it the school-house, the academy, and the college. Around the house of God, as a nucleus, the village was gathered; and from that, as a radiating point, extended itself into the surrounding wastes. From that point the forests disappeared: around that point the light of the sun was let down to the earth that had not for centuries felt his beams, so dense had been the shades of the interminable wilderness. Religion was the primary thing—primary in each house, each school, each settlement, each city, each civil institution. The pilgrim had no higher aim than to promote it; he had no plan which did not contemplate its perpetuity and extension as far as his descendants might go. Such was the feeling when, more than two hundred years since, the great forest trembled first under the axe of the foreigner, and new laws and new institutions began in the western world.

That this should continue to be always the leading feature among a people situated as they were, was not perhaps to be expected. He knows little of the propensities of our nature who would be surprised to learn that religion began before long to occupy a secondary place in the public mind. Doomed to the hard toil of felling the forests, and reducing a most perverse and intractable soil to a fit state for cultivation; feeling soon the influence of that then infant passion which has since in this country expanded to such giant proportions—the love of gain; engaged in conflicts with savages, and subject to the ravages of war—of that species of war which showed mercy neither to age nor sex—it was not wonderful that their early zeal should die away, and that iniquity should come in like a flood. Such was the fact. Within less than a hundred years a most sad change had occurred in this country on the subject of religion. Extensively in the churches of New England, and in all the churches, there was a most melancholy decline. From this state of apathy nothing could rouse them but a series of mighty movements like that on the day of pentecost; and it was then—now just a hundred years ago—that those won-

derful displays of divine power in revivals of religion, which have so eminently characterized our own country, and which were the pledge that God meant to perpetuate the religious institutions of our land, commenced.

2. This was the second period in our religious history. It began under the ministry of Whitefield, Edwards, the Tennants, and their fellow-laborers, and continued from about the year 1730 to 1750. Of this great religious excitement, which extended from Maine to Georgia, and which created the deepest interest in Britain and America, I need now to say little. The history has been written by that great man who was a principal actor in those scenes—I mean President Edwards. I will just add, that the character and talents of the men engaged in those religious movements were such as to place them above the suspicion of their being the work of feeble minds, or the productions of fanaticism. The Tennants were among the most able ministers of the land. Davies, afterwards the successor of Edwards in Princeton College, was one of the most eloquent and holy men that this country has produced. Edwards, as a man of profound thought, as an acute and close reasoner, has taken his place by the side of Locke, and Reid, and Dugald Stewart, if he has not surpassed them all; and his name is destined to be as immortal as theirs. Probably no man in any country or age has possessed the *reasoning faculty* in such perfection as Jonathan Edwards; a man raised up, among other purposes, to rebuke the sneer of the foreigner, when he charges America with the want of talent, and to show that the most profound intellect is well employed when it is engaged in promoting revivals of religion. From those profound disquisitions, those abstruse and subtle inquiries which have given immortality to his name, he turned with ease and pleasure to the interesting scenes when God's Spirit descended on the hearts of men. The name of Whitefield is one that is to go down, as an orator, as far as the name of Demosthenes or Cicero. Garrick, first of dramatic actors, rejoiced that he had not chosen the stage, confessing that if he had, his own fame would have been eclipsed; and Franklin—that great philosopher—sought every opportunity to listen to the eloquence of that wonderful man. He influenced more minds than have ever before or since been swayed by any public speaker; and diffused his sentiments through more hearts than any other orator that has lived. It pleased God that these revivals should be produced and carried on under the ministry of the most profound reasoner and the most eloquent man of the age, that scepticism itself might be disarmed, and that the world might have a pledge that they were not the work of enthusiasm.

The effect of those revivals was long felt in the American churches. Yet other scenes were drawing near of great interest in this land, and deeply affecting the vitality of religion. Soon the colonies were agitated with the calamities incident to the war with France, and then soon again with the absorbing events of our

own revolution. Throughout the land the effects of those scenes were felt in the churches and on religion. In not a few instances churches were disorganized; their members were led to the battle-field; their ministers were compelled to leave their charges: the houses of God were converted into hospitals; the public mind was engrossed with the events of war; the public strength was consecrated to the defence of violated rights; and time, and influence, and property were demanded to achieve our independence. As in all wars, the institutions of religion were neglected; the Sabbath ceased extensively to be a day of holy rest; and profaneness, and intemperance, and licentiousness—every where the attendants of war—spread over the land. In the scenes which characterized the American revolution, revivals of religion could not be expected to occur, nor could it be otherwise than that a state of apathy on the subject should characterize the American people.

There was another cause immediately succeeding this, that tended still more to shake the firmness of our religious institutions. I allude to the French revolution. From the first, the American people deeply sympathized with that nation in their struggles for freedom. To them we had been bound by ties of gratitude for valuable services, no less than by the sympathies which in this land we always must feel for those who pant for liberty. The consequence was obvious; and though alarming, inevitable. The opinions of their philosophers became popular; their books were kindly entertained, and their doctrines embraced. The revolution in France was conducted on infidel principles, and with infidels and atheists as the guides of the nation. In our love for liberty we forgot our hatred of infidelity; and in our ardent wishes for success in the cause of freedom, we forgot that our own freedom had been achieved under the guidance of other men than Voltaire, Diderot, and D'Alembert; and that we had acknowledged another Divinity than the "goddess of reason." And the result was what might have been foreseen. In the years that succeeded our revolution, the nation was fast sinking into infidelity; and Paine's "Age of Reason" was fast supplanting the Bible in the minds of thousands of our countrymen. A conflict arose between christianity and infidelity. The argument was close and long, and infidelity was driven from the field, and a victory was achieved not less important than the victories in our revolution. That intellectual warfare saved the churches in this land; and the result furnished a pledge that infidelity is not to triumph in this western world.

3. Yet it was not by argument only that this speculative infidelity was met. And this leads me to the *third* period in our religious history. The Holy Spirit sealed that argument, and engraved that truth on the heart in the revivals of religion that characterized the close of the last and the beginning of the present century. Of the favored agents in that time, it is necessary only to mention the name of DWIGHT—a name that was a pledge that

solid piety, sober views, elevated character, a brilliant fancy, high integrity and moral worth, might deem itself honored to be engaged in a revival of religion. Under a single sermon of his, it is recorded that no less than three revivals of religion commenced; and in Yale College—a place where least of all we should look for enthusiasm and fanaticism, no less than four revivals occurred under his presidency, resulting in the conversion of two hundred and ten young men, who, in their turn, have been the instruments of the salvation of thousands of souls. It was in such scenes that God interposed to save the churches and our country. And but for such works of grace at the fountains of intelligence and power, infidelity would have diffused its rank and poisonous weeds over the land.

4. The other period in our religious history is more directly our own times—times that have been eminently characterized for revivals of religion. I cannot go at length into a statement of the features of those revivals, nor of their influence. I can only say that in one part of our land, and in the oldest seminary of learning in our nation, there had been a deplorable apostacy from the sentiments of our fathers; that the deity and atonement of the Son of God was denied; that this form of pretended christian doctrine advanced with great pretensions to learning, to exclusive liberality, to critical skill, to refinement, to courtesy—that it appealed to the great and the gay, and sought its proselytes in the mansions of the rich and the homes of the refined; and that it stood up against revivals of religion, and all the forms of expanded christian beneficence. This scheme was met by argument, and learning, and critical power equal to its own. But not by that alone. It has been met by revivals of religion, and its progress checked by the work of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of men.

Another feature of our times. We were fast becoming a nation of drunkards. We could ascertain that there were three hundred thousand drunkards in our land, and that from ten to twenty thousand were annually consigned to drunkards' graves. And this mighty evil has also been met by revivals of religion. Hundreds of churches have been visited by the Spirit of God as the result of their efforts in the temperance reformation; and hundreds of thousands of our young men have been saved from the evils and disgraces of intemperance because God has visited the churches with the influences of his Spirit.

There was another dark feature in our religious prospects. The love of gain had become, and is still our besetting sin. This passion goads on our countrymen, and they forget all other things. They forsake the homes of their fathers; they wander away from the place of schools and churches to the wilderness of the west; they go from the sound of the Sabbath-bell, and they forget the Sabbath, and the Bible,

and the place of prayer; they leave the places where their fathers sleep in their graves, and they forget the religion which sustained and comforted them. They go for gold, and they wander over the prairie, they fell the forest, they ascend the stream in pursuit of it, and they trample down the law of the Sabbath, and soon, too, forget the laws of honesty and fair-dealing, in the insatiable love of gain. Meantime every man, such is our freedom, may advance any sentiments he pleases. He may defend them by all the power of argument, and enforce them by all the eloquence of persuasion. He may clothe his corrupt sentiments in the charms of verse, and he may make a thousand cottages beyond the mountains re-echo with the corrupt and the corrupting strain. He may call to his aid the power of the press, and may secure a lodgment for his infidel sentiments in the most distant habitation in the republic. What can meet this state of things, and arrest the evils that spread with the fleetness of the courser or the wind? What can pursue and overtake these wanderers but revivals of religion—but that Spirit which, *like* the wind, acts where it pleases? Yet they must be pursued. If our sons go thus, they are to be followed and reminded of the commands of God. None of them are to be suffered to go to any fertile vale or prairie in the west without the institutions of the Gospel; nor are they to be suffered to construct a hamlet, or to establish a village, or to build a city that shall be devoted to any other God than the God of their fathers. By all the self-denials of benevolence; by all the power of argument; by all the implored influences of the Holy Ghost, they are to be persuaded to plant there the rose of Sharon, and to make the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to bud and blossom as the rose. In such circumstances God HAS interposed; and he has thus blessed our own land and times with signal revivals of religion.

The remarks thus far made conduct us to this conclusion, that we owe most of our religion in this land to revivals; that the great and appalling evils which have threatened us as a people have been met and turned back by revivals; that every part of our country has thus, either directly or indirectly, felt the influence of revivals. Scarce a village or a city smiles on all our vast landscape that has not been hallowed in some part of its history by the deeply-felt presence of Israel's God. And he who loves his country: who looks back with gratitude to those periods when the God of salvation has conducted us through appalling dangers; or who looks abroad upon our vast land and contemplates the mighty movements in the pursuit of gold, and pleasure, and ambition; who sees here how inefficacious are all ordinary means to arrest the evils which threaten us, will feel the necessity of crying unto God unceasingly for the continuance and extension of REVIVALS OF PURE RELIGION.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 2. Vol. XV.) FEBRUARY, 1841. (Whole No. 170.

SERMON CCXCIII.

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PHILADELPHIA.

REVIVALS OF RELIGION IN CITIES AND LARGE TOWNS.

No. 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF REVIVALS THERE.

"*And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations,* BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM.—Luke, 24 : 47.

In two previous discourses I have endeavored to explain the nature of revivals of religion; to show that they are in accordance with the laws of the human mind and the mode in which society is organized; that they are described in the Scriptures as inestimable blessings; and that their value has been shown in a special manner in the history of religion in our own country. My particular object in this course of Lectures, however, was not so much to vindicate revivals in general, as to consider their relation to cities and large towns; and I propose now to enter on this, the main part of our subject. The point which will be before us at this time will be THE IMPORTANCE OF REVIVALS OF RELIGION IN CITIES AND LARGE TOWNS. On a subject so copious I scarcely know where to begin, or what topics of illustration to select out of the numbers which at once present themselves to the mind. But passing by a great variety of considerations which cannot be urged in the short time allotted to a single public service, or reserving them to illustrate other parts of our main subject, I shall select a few designed to ascertain the Redeemer's view of the importance of cities; the view of the apostles on the same

subject; and the bearing which the state of religion in cities must have on the world at large.

I. I begin with the view which the Saviour had of the importance of special efforts for the conversion of cities.

Our text contains an expression of his views about the importance of revivals in cities. When it was uttered, he was about to finish his work on earth. He had made an atonement for sin; he had risen from the dead; he was soon to ascend to heaven; and he was about giving to his disciples his parting charge, and directing them in regard to their plans and labors for the conversion of the world. It is natural to suppose that he would suggest to them the most feasible and economical mode of expending their strength and forming their plans; and that he would direct them how to act in the most efficient manner on the strong points of influence in the world. Our text contains the sum of his instructions. Repentance and remission of sins were to be preached among all nations, BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM. That was the capital of the nation; that the place where he had been put to death; that a city pre-eminent in wickedness and in influence; and that, therefore, was the place to which their attention was to be first directed. It is worthy of remark also, as an illustration of our subject, that he designed that they should labor there, with special reference to a revival of religion in that city. There they were to tarry "until they were endued with power from on high," (verse 49,) and there to "wait for the promise of the Father." Acts, 1 : 4. In that great and guilty metropolis they were to remain until the great movement for the conversion of the world to God was to be commenced in a glorious revival of religion.

The Redeemer's views of the importance of religion in cities were further illustrated by his own personal labors when on earth. He had designed a personal ministry that was to continue but three or four years; and it was manifestly a question with him where that period could be most advantageously spent for the great objects which he had in view. Thirty years he had spent, before he entered on his public work, in the quiet retreats of an obscure and humble country village; far from the noise and bustle of a large town; far from the excitements of the capital; far from the distractions and anxieties of a populous city. He had loved—we may suppose without much danger of indulging in mere fancy—the hills and vales, the fields and groves, the shady retreats, the stillness and quiet of the region around Nazareth—a love in which all who desire to cultivate meek, and humble, and pure religion *like* his will participate—for such scenes are most favorable to communion with God. Is it improper to suppose that the feelings which made the Redeemer delight in a place like Nazareth were such as prompted the following lines from the sweet christian poet Cowper:

"Far from the world, O Lord, I flee;
"From strife and tumult far;
"From scenes where Satan wages still
"His most successful war.

"The calm retreat, the silent shade,
"With prayer and praise agree;
"And seem by thy sweet bounty made
"For those who follow thee."

But when he entered on his public work, he *emerged* from this obscure and humble life. He made his permanent home in Capernaum, a central city in Galilee, at the head of the sea of Tiberias. He preached in all the cities which skirted the lake of Gennesareth; in the large towns which were between them and the capital; and he preached much amidst assembled thousands on the great festivals in Jerusalem itself. His mighty works were in the vicinity of these large towns, where thousands could easily be assembled to hear him. He was found in the busy haunts of men; his walks were along the shores of that lake where stood Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida; and his aim was to carry at once the influence of his Gospel to the centres of influence and power. The sum of his views on this subject are expressed in the following passages of the New Testament: "And it came to pass," says Matthew, "when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities." Chapter 11 : 1. "I must preach the kingdom of God," said he, "to other cities also, for therefore am I sent." Luke, 4 : 43. "How often," said he of Jerusalem, "*how often* would I have gathered THY CHILDREN together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Matthew, 23 : 37, Luke, 13 : 34. So it is said respecting most of the works of his public ministry. "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not." Matthew, 11 : 20. It is a circumstance also which may throw some light on the divine estimate of the importance of cities, that it was predicted that the announcements of the Gospel would be first made to them. "O thou that bringest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say UNTO THE CITIES OF JUDAH, Behold your God!" Isaiah, 11 : 9.

The same thing in regard to the views of the Redeemer is every where evinced in his instructions to his disciples. It is manifest that he anticipated that the principal sphere of *their* labors would be in cities and large towns. "Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy." Matt. 10 : 11. "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come." John, 10 : 1. "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another; for

verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come." Matthew, 10 : 23. From these and numerous similar passages of Scripture it is evident that the Saviour felt that it was of special importance that great efforts should be made for the conversion of cities, and that he not only spent a large portion of his own public ministry there, but anticipated that his apostles would also. We shall not err, therefore, in the conclusion, that he felt that it was of special importance that cities and large towns should be pervaded with his Gospel, and that *in* those places were to be witnessed signal displays of his saving power.

II. The same conclusion will be reached, if we examine the views which the apostles had of the importance of these fields of labor. I need not say that a large part of the labors of the apostles, so far as the Scripture record informs us, was devoted to cities and large towns, and that the most signal success of the Gospel was there. All that is needful for the illustration of this part of our subject, is the most summary reference to the labors of the apostles and to the character of the large cities where they labored. I by no means mean to say that the apostles did not feel it important to preach the Gospel in country villages and neighborhoods. Their commission extended to all the world, and we know that Paul preached the Gospel in all the places where he travelled. But the idea is, that they felt that cities were central places of power and influence; that they were the strong holds of the enemy of man; that wickedness was concentrated there; and that their object was to go from city to city until they reached the capital of the world, the very seat of imperial power, and formed their plan with a design that the banners of the faith should, if possible before they died, be seen streaming from the palaces of the Cesars. They acted on the principle on which Alexander and Cesar, and all the great conquerors of all times act, that of seizing upon the strong places of power and holding them in subjection, with the assurance that all other places will then become an easy conquest.

A slight glance at the labors of the apostles and at the principal places where the Gospel triumphed at first, will show the estimate which they affixed to cities and large towns, and their views of the proper places where special efforts for the spread of the Gospel should be made. The Gospel was first preached, after the ascension of the Redeemer, in Jerusalem, a city ten miles in circumference, and esteemed the third city of the age, the largest city of the land in which he lived, and the capital of the nation. The apostles went to Antioch, on the Orontes, the capital of Syria, and made that a centre of christian influence. They preached in Ephesus, regarded as the ornament, and in fact the most proud and splendid city in Asia Minor, and established a church there. There stood one of the seven wonders of the world, and there idolatry was intrenched with a power and

sustained with a magnificence not surpassed in any part of the earth. They preached in Derbe, in Lystra, and in Iconium—cities in the same region. They founded churches in Smyrna, the commercial capital of Asia Minor; in Pergamos, the literary capital of Asia Minor; in Thyatira; in Sardis, the once splendid capital of Croesus; in Philadelphia; and in Laodicea. They preached in Philippi and Thessalonica, and founded churches there. They preached in Athens, the distinguished seat of philosophy, science, and art, and where the Gospel would be opposed by the most subtle and refined philosophy of the world; in Corinth, the splendid capital of Achaia, and the very centre of refinement, of luxury, and of licentiousness—the Paris of antiquity; and they carried the Gospel to the very capital of the world, and established a church in Rome itself. Now in the records which we have in the Acts of the Apostles, it is remarkable that a large part of the narrative is occupied in detailing the labors of the apostles in these and in other cities; and it is *as* remarkable that notwithstanding all the difficulties in the case, and all the obstacles to the Gospel in cities and large towns, its most signal triumphs were there.

From this allusion to the labors of the apostles the following things are demonstrated: (1.) That they deemed cities and large towns to be worthy of their special attention and their special efforts. (2.) That they had the utmost confidence in the truth of the religion which they preached. They had no concealment; they had no fear of submitting the evidences of their religion to the most learned, acute, and philosophic portions of mankind. They *sought* to submit the proofs of christianity to the philosophers in Athens, in Corinth, and in Rome; they desired to exhibit them to the priests of pagan idolatry, to the literati of the world, and to princes, nobles, and monarchs; they performed their miracles in the most open manner, and adduced the evidence of the resurrection of their Master on Mars' Hill and in the Roman Forum, as well as in Jerusalem: and they confidently expected that if they could *get a hearing*, they could convince the most learned and philosophic portions of mankind of the truth of the christian religion. Such was not a work of impostors; it was a course pursued only by men who were honest, and who had the most unwavering conviction of the truth of the system which they preached. (3.) Their course demonstrates that the Gospel has *power* to meet all forms of sin and corruption, and that there is nothing in cities and large towns that constitutes an insuperable obstacle to a revival of religion. That Gospel which had power to overcome the pride and deep corruption of the Jewish capital, when the Redeemer had just been put to death, which could triumph in gay and voluptuous Corinth, in the splendid capital of Asia Minor, and in Rome itself, has power to meet any form of gayety, licentiousness, corruption, fashion, idolatry, and combined sin of any city in nominally christian

lands, and in the heathen world. They who doubt that mighty revivals of religion may exist in large cities and towns, doubt in the face of all history, and belie all the records of the early propagation of their religion.

III. Having thus endeavored to ascertain the sense of the Redeemer and of the apostles in regard to the importance of special efforts for the conversion of cities and large towns, I proceed, in the third place, to remark, that that importance is seen from the fact that vast wealth is concentrated in those places, and that the purposes of christianity require that that wealth should be consecrated to the Redeemer. When I speak of this, I do not mean, of course, that the principal wealth of any community is in such places. That *must* lie scattered over vast surfaces, and be in many hands, in order *to maintain* cities and large towns. But I speak of that wealth which is concentrated in the hands of the comparatively few; of the wealth which is available for the purposes of christian benevolence; of the wealth which has the principal power of corrupting or saving, of destroying or blessing the world. This world is to be converted to God, and it is in vain to attempt this without large and liberal benefactions. To a great extent, the *large* sums needed for that object must and will be derived from the dwellers in cities. It is there that we expect that money will be freely given; whether it be for christian charity; for schools, and colleges, and seminaries of learning; or whether it be for political purposes, for the patronage of fashion and vice, for the maintenance of the theatre, or for the support of profligacy and atheism. The effect of true religion is to lead men to consecrate their property honestly and wholly to God; nor can there be any true religion where this is not done. Now one has only to cast an eye over the large cities and towns of this land, to see how important it is that the mighty power of the Gospel should be felt there in constraining the rich to devote their property to God. Let him a moment reflect on the *abuses* of that property; on the immense sums which are expended in luxury of living; in splendor of dwellings, equipage, and apparel; in intoxicating drinks; in the patronage of the theatre and various corrupting forms of amusement; and it will be no difficult matter to see how important it is that the influence of religion should be felt in the cities of our land. It may seem startling, but it is probably true, to say, that all expenses of the various benevolent Societies in this land for the propagation of the Gospel in the heathen world, would be more than met by the annual expenses in one of our large cities for the single article of intoxicating drinks. In the city of New-York, during the last year but two, it is ascertained that the amount paid to support its four theatres was more than was contributed by all the benevolent Societies in this country for the spread of the Gospel. That wealth now *all* goes to corrupt and destroy the morals, the peace, and the souls of men. It is in cities emi-

nently that its debasing power is felt. It is there that it alienates the soul from God, and opens fountains of corruption before the unwary and the young. It is there on every hand that we see its abuse to purposes of infamy; there that it eminently resists the Gospel; and there that it sustains the empire of Satan on earth. It is there that foreigners—dancers and actors—who come to debase and corrupt the young with the lax notions of morals which prevail in the licentious capitals of Europe, are chiefly found. And while I speak of this, it is not less important to make another remark on the necessity of revivals of religion in cities. A large portion of that wealth is held by the members of the christian church, and it is a fact, that the constantly-recurring objects of christian benevolence are sustained by a very few men out of the many hundreds who are members of the churches. To re-convert those who are in the church; to teach them the true value of property, and the true intent of the Giver in bestowing it on them; to show them "a more excellent way" than to hoard it or to expend it for luxury and magnificence; and to impress on their hearts, as a great vital principle, that all they have belongs to God, and to him alone, is now one of the most desirable objects of christian benevolence, and one of the chief things to be accomplished by the agency of the Holy Spirit in our land. O if all the wealth in these cities were truly consecrated to God, what desolate fields of heathenism are there in the wide world which would not soon smile under the blessings of the Gospel? what desert and solitary place is there that would not bud and blossom as the rose?

IV. The *talent* concentrated in cities and large towns is a fourth reason why special efforts should be made for their conversion. Before I am through with what I wish to say on this head, I shall not be suspected of a design to *flatter* the inhabitants of such places as being in general superior to all the rest of mankind in intellectual strength or in solid attainments. I have passed three-fourths of my life and one-third of my ministry in the country; and I have endeavored to observe the comparative amount of intellect and good sense in the two situations. When I speak, therefore, of the talent in cities as a reason for special effort for their conversion, or to show their importance, I by no means wish to be understood as affirming that the inhabitants of cities are pre-eminently distinguished for what Mr. Locke calls "large, sound, round-about sense." I do not mean that there is, in general, more power to appreciate a solid argument or close reasoning; or that there is a better acquaintance with the Bible; or a higher appreciation of the maxims of sound morals; or more patient reflection on the duties of life; or more attentive contemplation of the relations which men sustain to their Maker; or a higher power of detecting sophistry, or of pronouncing on that which is characterized in public discourses by mere sound, or by

false and shallow attempts at reasoning. And to apply my remarks to the immediate subject before us, I by no means mean to say that the mass of people in this land in the country are not as fully able to appreciate good preaching as their more favored and perhaps envied city brethren. Nor do I mean to say that the hurry and bustle of a city life is as well adapted to train men for patient thought; or that the kind of education which the mass of those in the so-called more elevated ranks in cities receive, peculiarly qualifies them for the office of judging of the truths of religion, in comparison with those who have been trained in what are esteemed the humbler walks of a country life. The truth is, neither situation in itself makes men qualified for patient and sound reflection, neither situation makes them of course fools. Alike in city and in country in this land, there are multitudes—it is the condition of the *mass* of the people—who are endowed with good sense, with sober views, with patient thought, and with appropriate education, to fit them to understand the truths of religion, to weigh well its evidences, and to appreciate a sensible argument when a sensible argument is urged; nor do I know that one *situation* can claim priority over the other.

It is true, moreover, that the talent in a city is often greatly over-rated; and I do not mean to say that the Saviour or the apostles ever sought a city because they supposed the *mass* of intellect there was more elevated or cultivated than elsewhere. It is true that ministers often over-rate the amount of talent in a city, and that they sometimes evince an anxiety to be city pastors—which is any thing but a commendation of their own discernment, or their qualifications for the office, or of their power of judging of the place where true happiness is to be found—for, I take it, the brightest picture of happiness in this world is in the image of a much loved and venerated pastor in the quiet retreats of a country parish. It is true, also, that there is sometimes a *fear* of a city congregation and of a city dwelling—which operates much to prevent a faithful application of the truth—*as if* splendid apparel was necessarily connected with profound intellect; or sofas, and ottomans, and marble mantels, and well laden centre-tables necessarily implied cultivated minds; or gay and gorgeous equipage conferred the power of criticising profoundly and judging correctly of moral subjects. The truth is, that patient thinking, long-cherished recollections of an apt illustration or a solid argument, and just appreciation of a sound discourse, are often found most perfectly in the farmer who is all the week at his plough, and not in the whirl of fashion and business of a city life; a life where with the scenes of business of Monday morning are obliterated all the arguments, and illustrations, and impressions of the previous day.

But while this is true, it is true, also, that in this land and in all others the talent that most decidedly directs public opinion, and that acts with most power on the public mind, is found concen-

trated usually in cities and large towns. The most decided and influential talent in Judea was undoubtedly found in Jerusalem; the most profound intellect in Greece was in Athens and in Corinth; the most mighty minds in the Roman empire were concentrated in Rome itself and in the surrounding towns and villas. It was from these centres that the power of talent—more then than now—at the bar, in the forum, in the senate-chamber; the power of talent in philosophy, in the drama, in eloquence, and in song was diffused throughout the world. Such, though to a less extent comparatively, is the case now. The principal talent in the medical and legal professions will seek cities and large towns as the places where it may be exercised to advantage—whether the purpose be gold or fame. Science and literature, for obvious reasons, will be found there; and the talent which seeks to influence great masses of mind; to direct public opinion; or to rise to sudden affluence and fame, will flow to such centres. All this is obvious and indisputable; and it is *as* obvious and indisputable, that it is desirable that special efforts should be made that that talent should be converted to God. It is not that the soul of a profound philosopher, or of a man of eminent legal attainments, or of a man distinguished in the medical profession, or of a man distinguished for science or eloquence, is of more value, or cost the Saviour more pangs to redeem it, than their humblest client or patient, or the most unlettered man in the cottage of poverty; but it is that that talent is endowed with higher power for good or evil, and that its influence must be wider spread in promoting or retarding true religion.

V. I add, as a fifth consideration, the fact that cities and large towns are places where strangers resort in great multitudes, and that revivals of religion are specially needed there for *their* conversion and for a healthful moral influence on their minds. It will be recollected that in our text the Saviour directs his apostles to *begin* the work of preaching the Gospel "at Jerusalem." Turn now to the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and you will see at least one reason why this direction was given. The feast of Pentecost was near, and on that occasion it was arranged by the Redeemer, that the Holy Ghost should descend in the first great and glorious revival of religion. Yet on that occasion we are told "there were dwelling (or sojourning, κατοικοῦντες) at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." Acts, 2 : 5. "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites," we are told were there; "and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians." Acts, 2 : 9–11. It was not without design that the Gospel was to be first proclaimed with power, and that the Holy Ghost was to descend when these strangers were there. What would be the [illegible]fect of their conversion? The

Gospel would soon be borne by them to the farthest part of the then known world. Those strangers were soon to disperse and return to their homes—just as the flitting multitudes do that sojourn in this city for a little while for business or for pleasure. But the Saviour saw that *if* those multitudes were brought under the influence of a revival of religion; if while they were in Jerusalem they were led to embrace the true Messiah; if while there their minds were directed to the eternal welfare of the soul, and they should return to their homes imbued with the spirit of the Gospel, the effect would be immediate almost on the remotest portions of the world. How different would be the influence on the destiny of mankind from what it would have been had those "strangers" been invited by the professing christians to splendid entertainments and parties of pleasure; or had they been introduced as distinguished strangers often are in our cities now—and I fear sometimes by professing christians too—to theatres, or invited and tempted, as they are now, to drink deep of the intoxicating bowl!

What would be the effect on the strangers that crowd *this* city of a continual revival of religion here? What would be the effect on their minds and hearts if they should be constrained to feel when they enter our houses of worship, that the Spirit of God was there as he was in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost? What would be the effect if in their transactions of business here they should find all our merchants—or even all our professedly *christian* merchants—governed only by the pure and holy principles of the Gospel? What would be the effect, if, when they are invited to our dwellings, they should see the decanter banished from every side-board and every table, and the style of living regulated by a conscientious regard to the will of Christ; and the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel controling us in our dwellings? What would be the effect if one mighty and far-pervading revival of religion here, like that on the day of Pentecost, should make the visiters to the theatres so few that they would be closed, and should make it disreputable for a stranger or a citizen to patronize a place of corruption and infamy? How soon would the effect be visible in the extremity of the land and the world! To see this, let these facts be borne in mind: (1.) Great numbers of strangers are in all our large cities, at all times, from every part of our land and the world. I preach the Gospel every year to many hundreds of such persons; and probably I am not exceeding the truth when I say that the aggregate of such persons is considerably more than the number of my regular hearers. To a great extent this is true of all other pastors in this city and in other cities. I trust and believe that the effect of their worshipping with us has not had an unhappy influence on their minds (if I may use the language of Paul as descriptive of what I mean) while they have been "beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ;" (Col. 2 : 5;) and I have

been permitted to know of some most happy, and I trust saving influences on the minds of strangers resulting from their worshipping with us. But it is not unkindness to ask what *would* have been the effect on the multitudes which have been with us, had they witnessed here scenes like those on the day of Pentecost? (2.) Again, those strangers are usually men of influence, wealth, and power at home. They are the centres of opinion to large circles there. They control the habits, or the fashions, or the religious opinions of those by whom they are surrounded. A large portion of those to whom *I* preach in this manner are the respectable and influential merchants of the west; men who are doing as much as any others to form the habits of the mighty empire that is rising up beyond the mountains; men who are moulding that vast population that is soon to give to this nation its president, its great officers of government, and its laws; and men who in that vast region are either to stay the tide of infidelity and sin, or to urge it onward; for if we are ever to be a nation of slaves, the chain that is to bind us is to be forged beyond the mountains. They are the men who are to be the patrons of order and education, of common schools, of colleges, and of the institutions of religion;—many of them are men who are pillars in those churches, and whose piety is to receive an impression that shall be lasting, even during a temporary sojourning with us. It is needless to ask what would be the influence on such men if they found this city and all these churches blessed with revivals of religion like rains and dews of heaven. (3.) Again. If I address one such stranger now, he will pardon me if I make a remark particularly applicable to himself; if I do not address such an one, the remark will be useful to others, as reminding them of what is the fact in regard to such strangers, and of the need of a pure, heavenly, christian influence in all our churches here. The remark is, that even christians are not *always* as consistent and circumspect when they are abroad as when they are at home. They are, or suppose they are, unobserved. They are away from the vigilant eye of a wife, a neighbor, a child. They feel that there is less depending on their example than when they are under the well-known eye of a vigilant public opinion. Members of the churches sometimes travel on the Sabbath when away from home, and when they suppose it possible they will not be known as professing christians. They sometimes attend church but a part of the day when in cities, and the remainder of the day is devoted to *sight-seeing*. It is an obvious plea with them, that they are engaged in business during the week, and that it cannot be *very* improper for them to visit public places *once* on the Sabbath when they are unknown. And it is not improbable that of a Sabbath afternoon, in the spring or summer, enough such professors might usually be found at the places of public resort to constitute a church respectable enough in numbers to celebrate the Lord's supper. They sometimes also visit

places of somewhat doubtful morality, and where, if at home, they never would be found. It is not *impossible* that christian ministers and other members of the churches sometimes visit the opera in Paris or in Italy, who would have many misgivings about *recommending* such a course to the more spiritual part of their flock or their brother christians at home, and who themselves, when there, are most conscientious in abstaining from such amusements. And I may ask, are professors of religion and officers of the churches from other parts of our land never found in the theatres of our cities? It is very doubtful whether a single theatre could be sustained for a month in this city if it were not for the patronage of strangers. But if this be the fact, then the importance of revivals here, of a healthful, constant, unceasing heavenly influence in all our churches, is apparent. To influence the stranger christian; to incline his heart more and more to the ways of God; to keep him from temptation when here; and to send him back to his home, blessed not only by our hospitality, but with more of the Spirit of his Master, we should pray unceasingly for the descending influences of the grace of God on all our churches and on all the population of this city. To save the stranger that comes among us from the dram-shop, the theatre, the house of infamy, we should beseech the God of heaven that he may be greeted when he comes here with the influence of religion; that every christian whom he may meet may show that his heart is deeply engaged in the work of the Lord, and feels a deep interest in the salvation of souls; and that throughout all our cities and towns there may be felt the power of the presence of the God OF REVIVALS.

SERMON CCXCIV.

BY REV. ALBERT BARNES.

No. 4. THE DESIRABLENESS OF REVIVALS.

"*O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.*"—Hab. 3: 2.

The sentiment of this text, in the connection in which it stands, is, that a revival of pure religion was desirable; and particularly in view of the awful judgments of God, and the manifestations of his majesty and justice which the prophet saw in vision. God is seen by the prophet approaching amidst many terrors to take vengeance on the wicked. His glory covers the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise. His brightness is as the light; and there are bright beams (marg.) like playing

lightnings at his side. Before him goes the pestilence, and burning coals at his feet. The nations are driven asunder; and the everlasting mountains are scattered; the perpetual hills bow; and the deep lifts up its voice. The sun and the moon stand still in their habitation; and the universe is in consternation at the awful presence of JEHOVAH. In view of these sublime and awful manifestations, the prophet pleads with God to revive his work, and to remember mercy in the midst of wrath. It was only by a revival of religion that his wrath could be averted; or that his people could be prepared for these sublime exhibitions of their God.

I shall take occasion from these words to address you on the desirableness of revivals of religion, particularly in cities; and shall endeavor to adhere so far, at least, to the sentiment of the text, as to keep before the eye the desirableness of such works of grace from the awful displays of Divine justice which the inhabitants of guilty cities have reason to apprehend. My last lecture on this general subject was on the *importance* of cities and large towns, particularly with reference to religion. My design in this discourse is to state some reasons why such works of grace as I have endeavored to describe as included under the word REVIVALS, are desirable in such places.

Who doubts this? it may at once be asked; And what is the necessity of discoursing on so plain a topic to a christian people? Are there any christians who doubt that a revival of pure religion in a city is desirable? And can there be a necessity to occupy the time of an entire service on a point where there can be but one opinion? These questions, I doubt not, would be asked by many, in a candid and not a captious spirit; and they demand an answer in the same spirit. In a word, then, I would reply, (1.) That men often admit that to be true in relation to which they have little feeling or emotion; and my wish in regard to a large portion of my hearers, is not so much to convince their understandings on so plain a point, as to enkindle in the heart an earnest *desire* for such works of mercy. It may be that the main point of my discourse would be at once admitted to be true without argument; but it may be, also, that its force may be more deeply felt by the contemplation of the views which I shall exhibit. (2.) To the candid questions which I have supposed to be submitted to me at the outset of my argument, I wish also to propose one or two in reply, in a spirit and manner *as* candid and as free from captiousness. Is it true, then, that *all* professed christians really desire a revival of religion of the kind which I have described? Are there none who start back at the word REVIVAL, and who feel an instinctive dislike to the name? Are there none in whose minds the word suggests the idea of mere excitement; of scenes of enthusiasm and disorder; of irregularity and wildfire? Are there none who, when they pray, and with very honest intentions in the main,

for a revival, do it with many qualifications and mental reservations, and with an apprehension or fear that the prayer *may* be answered;—who pray from the custom of using such language, rather than from any intelligent and sincere wish that such scenes as that on the day of Pentecost may be witnessed? And I cannot but ask one more question. When prayers are offered *for* revivals, are there no prayers *against* them? While the fervent petitions of a portion of an assembled church ascend to heaven for the descent of the Holy Spirit like floods and showers, are there no prayers ascending to heaven, or no secret desires, that such influences may be restrained? no *counter* petitions that cross and recross the prayers of those who love revivals, as they ascend up to God? It is not given to men to know the hearts, nor the real feelings and desires of the professed people of God; but if it could be ascertained, it would not be uninteresting to know what portion of professed christians, in deep and fervent sincerity, daily pray, "O Lord, revive thy work!"

I do not consider it, therefore, superfluous to state some reasons why revivals of religion are desirable.

But what would be the scene, should there be a revival of religion in a city like this? I have on a former occasion explained at length my views of the nature of a revival. To the success of my argument at this time, it is quite material that we have some distinct idea of what would actually occur in such a case.

IT WOULD NOT BE MERE EXCITEMENT. I have no fondness for mere excitement. I do not advocate it. Indeed a very large part of my ministerial labors is directed *against* excitement, and intended to allay and restrain its feverishness. I refer to the agitations produced by the love of gain, and those which are exhibited in the political world, and in the excited and excitable world of gayety and fashion. I have never uttered a word in favor of disorder, lawlessness, irregularity, eccentricity, or of any religious movement which would be a violation of decency and order. I am no advocate for suspending the proper business of life, or of breaking in upon regular employment in honest and honorable industry. I have no views of religion or of revivals which would not make men more sober, and honest, and industrious, and chastened in their lives. I have not one word to say in disregard of the urbanities and civilities of social life; of the respect due to rank and office; not one word to say in favor of what has sometimes been charged on the promoters of revivals—falsely in general—a contempt for the courtesies of life, and an outrage on the feelings of others. I hold no views of religion which would not make men more courteous, refined, and truly polite and respectful *in* revivals and at all times. I advocate no excitement but that which truth produces—and not half as much as prevails in the gay world; I advocate the necessity for no new doctrines to carry on such a

work—no doctrines but such as were preached by the Redeemer and his apostles; I advocate no means and measures but such as are best adapted to secure to the Gospel—the pure Gospel—access to the human heart, and such as are in accordance with all the settled institutions of christianity; and I advocate no style of preaching that is vulgar in diction or action; that is offensive to good taste in tone and manner; that is not the result of careful preparation; and that is not characterized by the condensation of as much truth as can be made to reach the hearts of men; no preaching where the preacher is not much impressed, as conscious of his awful charge, and anxious mainly that the flock he feeds should feel it too.

What effects, then, should we anticipate from a general revival of religion in a city? There are in this city, for illustration, and its surrounding districts and liberties, somewhere about twenty-six thousand families. What is the character of a large portion of them, I need not now pause to say. Now the effect of a revival of religion that should pervade the whole population, would be seen at once in those families, and in all the influences that go from the family hearth and altar, and would be diffused from those centres over all the walks of life. Every family, if religion were to diffuse its influence there, would be a family of prayer. The morning and the evening sacrifice would ascend to God. Grateful praise would be poured on the ear of JEHOVAH in all these dwellings, as the beams of the new morning sun diffused their radiance over the world; and in the stillness of the evening, the works and duties of the day again performed, the interesting group would come around the altar again to render praise, and to commend themselves to the protecting care of Him who never slumbers nor sleeps. Each day they would go forth to its duties and trials consecrated by the morning offering of praise and prayer under the protection of the unslumbering eye of God, in each scene of sorrow or night of calamity they would bow submissively to his will. Children would be taught; taught in proper human learning; taught the Bible; taught the ways of virtue, religion, temperance, purity, and industry; taught to fear the name of God, to hate a lie, to prepare for an honorable career in the various walks of life. The Sabbath would return to bless each household with its influences of mercy; and the sanctuary would deepen the lessons of family instruction; and the universal rest from toil would be a sweet type of the heavenly world. Temperance would be promoted; and the fountains of poison that now flow every where to corrupt and destroy, would be closed for ever. The houses of pollution and infamy would no more open to allure and decoy the young to death; and their inmates, made living and pure members of the body of Christ, would be preparing to walk before him in white robes in heaven. The theatre would no more open its doors to invite the young, the stranger, and the defenceless to forget a father's prayers and a mother's counsels, and to become the companion of the unprincipled and the vile. Sober in-

dustry would take the place of idleness; chastity the place of impurity; hope would irradiate the countenance where now sits vacancy or despair; intelligence would take the place of ignorance; plenty and comfort would succeed to want; decency of apparel to penury and rags; beauty and health would re-visit the countenance now bloated and haggard; and peace, the heart that now hath wo and sorrow from intemperance; thought—sober, rich, pure, heavenly thought,—would succeed to gayety; honesty to fraud; integrity to baseness; universal charity to suspicion, inuendo, and slander; and a disposition to do good to all, and to spread the Gospel around the world with all its healing influences, would succeed the disposition to spend the wealth which God gives in the scenes of dissipation, revelry, and sin. Talent that now is wasted and blasted by sensuality, or perverted by ambition; genius whose fires are now kindled, and which now burn for nought, would be converted to noble purposes. That vigor of frame which is now wasted in scenes of dissipation, would prepare itself to brave the snows of the north or the sands of the equator, in making known a Saviour's love; and from lips where now heavy curses roll, the Gospel would soon whisper peace.

Meantime a revival of religion would destroy or injure nothing that is truly valuable. It would not interfere with one rational enenjoyment. It would not close one school. It would not diminish the interest in an orphan asylum, a hospital, a college, a charitable endowment, but would augment the interest in all. It would moor no ship to the wharf; arrest no car, and no steam-boat,—*except on the Sabbath;* and stay none of the wheels of commerce or of honorable and honest enterprise.

In one word, "a reformation extending to every house in the city would be the noblest sight the lover of humanity ever saw. The reign of vice which now regards no limit, but throws its malign influence within every enclosure, would on all sides be curtailed. The horrid clang of profaneness, the bloated features of dissipation, the haggard spectacle of prostitution, the inanity of vicious idleness, the menace of unbridled passion, of deliberate revenge, curtained behind human features, and heard remote, sometimes like thunders on the bosom of darkness—in short, the conflicts of interest, the wiles of dishonesty, the deep-laid snares of covetousness," which now meet us on every hand, would disappear. Two hundred thousand immortal beings, a large portion of whom are now pressing hard on each other in the broad and much-trodden way to death, now with conflicting interests and agitated passions, would at once commence the march to immortality. Hand in hand, with peaceful step and tranquil heart,—with many songs of praise and many prayers,—they would tread along the banks of the river of life, calm in view of the shadowy vale of death; elevated with the hope of immortal peace.

Our main inquiry now returns. Would such a work of grace be desirable in a city like this, or in any or all of the cities of our land? In answer to this inquiry,

(1.) I suggest, first, the influence on a city or the country at large. I need not attempt to prove that that influence is vast. In all that pertains to fashion, to literature, to morals, to religion, the influence of a city is incalculable. A large part of the fashions of the land, embracing a great many questions about economy and the proper modes and objects of life, and about *honesty*, too, in contracting and paying debts, are controlled by cities. Paris, on one subject, has given law to the most of Europe and of the world; and this city influences hundreds of thousands of immortal beings, either directly or indirectly, in the same manner. Say what we will, a large portion of mankind is guided by what is implied by the word *fashion*. Who can estimate the importance, therefore, of such an influence of religion as shall effectually check extravagance of life, and turn the thoughts of men to the sober objects for which they should live? On the *literature* of a people, no less than on its fashions, cities give law extensively. A large portion of the light reading of the world is formed, first for the inhabitants of cities, and then for those portions of the country that can be made to imitate them. From cities, as from centres, goes forth that vast amount of romance and poetry which is doing so much to undermine all just morality in this nation, and to destroy the souls of men. The prevalence of pure christianity in our cities, pervading all hearts, would arrest to a great extent this influence, and turn the attention of men to subjects more worthy of their immortal nature. The power of the newspaper press in cities is felt also throughout the land. It gives tone and character to thousands of presses in the smaller towns and villages. Who can estimate the effect that *would* be produced, if there was such a religious influence in cities as should make those fountains always pure? Such it *would be*, if the sentiments of the community were right; and one general revival of religion in our cities that should secure such an influence on the press as should close every newspaper establishment on the Sabbath; as should exclude all commendation of the theatre, and as should banish every advertisement and sentiment, such as a christian father would be unwilling his sons or daughters should read, would send an influence throughout the land.

I need not say that the influence of a city is direct, and almost omnipotent on a large circle of surrounding villages. Could the mighty population, which, in the summer months, is poured out from our cities on the Sabbath, by steam-boats, and cars, and other vehicles, be restrained by the influence of religion; could they be induced to enter the sanctuary themselves, and spend the day in the worship of God, what a change would be produced at once in a wide circle of towns around us! How peaceful to them would the Sabbath become! What a corrupting influence would be at once withdrawn! Then, indeed, a village near a city would not be regarded as necessarily accursed. Then it would not have occasion to complain of the obvious *injustice* done by its overgrown neighbor, in pouring forth its legions of the profane, the unprincipled and

the intemperate, to disturb the peace and corrupt the morals of others.

I observed, also, before, that in a large city almost every portion of the land has its representatives. From all parts of the country and the world they come for business or for pleasure. Who can calculate what would be the influence of a general revival of religion in those minds, and on the portions of the land from whence they came? The revival in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost was felt almost immediately in all parts of the then known world, by the return of the "strangers" who were converted there. There is scarcely one nook or corner of our vast republic that would not be influenced by such a work of grace. Cities in a nation are like the heart in man. Each stroke at the centre of life sends out influences for good or evil to the extremities, and is felt with healthful or destructive influence there. I need not add, if this be so, how responsible is the work of the christian ministry here! how solemn the obligations of every member of the church of Christ!

(2.) A second consideration to which I refer, is the worth of the souls of the multitudes congregated in cities. I by no means mean to be understood as saying that a soul is of more value here than elsewhere; of any more worth in the most splendid mansion than in the humblest abode of the poor. But what I wish to say is, that we may be more deeply affected with their value; we may become more deeply impressed with a sense of their danger. The scene itself is more impressive; the events that are passing daily before the eyes are better adapted to affect the heart. Immortal beings are crowded together; the busy, thoughtless multitude is constantly moving on before the eyes. The dense throng is passing by, regardless of admonition, and deaf to entreaty and to warning. A man travelling over an uncultivated prairie, or a waste of sands, might meet here and there, at far distant intervals, a stranger—and then pass on again amidst the lonely wastes. There would be little to rouse the mind in regard to the necessity of a mighty heavenly influence on the soul of the solitary man; and if he were disposed to present to him the subject of religion, there would be nothing in the circumstances to crowd it from the mind. But when a *city* is entered, how different is the scene! I look out of my window, and the dense throng of all ages and conditions rushes on. Strangers to me and to each other, they are moving on, an unbroken procession, all the day to eternity. I pass by the door of a theatre, and hundreds of immortal beings, thoughtless and unconcerned about the future, are leaving the place of amusement and corruption. I go into the marts of business, and there is a dense and jostling crowd anxious only for gain. I think of the brilliant party, and of the assembly-room, and there is another throng "with steps light and airy as the footsteps of Aurora," not less regardless of their immortal destiny. I think of the glitter of dress there, and the splendor of apartments, and the charms of music, and the brilliancy of wit, and the gracefulness of the dance, and all these are unconcern-

ed about their undying doom. I think of the low places of sensuality and wretchedness; of beastly intemperance, and of degrading vice, and there is another group equally regardless of their immortal destiny. Wherever you go, a dense throng surrounds you—a busy, active, restless, *unhappy*, dissatisfied multitude; a vast procession going to the grave—all under sentence of death—all sinners—all exposed to the eternal wrath of God. Each one of them has a soul whose value no numbers can compute; a soul of more worth than all the riches which commercial talent, all combined, has ever gained or can ever gain in this city, and which shall live in bliss or in wo when all that wealth shall be forgotten. Of their high powers, of their immortal destiny, of what God the Saviour has done for them, they are unconscious; or if they are conscious, they disregard it all. They are living for other objects; and their attention can by *no human means* be turned to the subject of their own soul's salvation.

Now it is not madness to ask where they will be a thousand years hence; nor to inquire what is probably to be their doom? Infidelity may sneer at such a suggestion; and stupidity may laugh; but a heathen monarch wept at the thought that his army, the greatest that had been ever raised, would be dead in a hundred years; and a greater than any heathen monarch wept over the destiny of a great and guilty population passing on like this to the bar of God. All the great interests of this thoughtless throng lie beyond the tomb. If they have none there, their life is a bubble, a vapor, a gorgeous illusion, a changing cloud, a mist on the mountain side. All in which they are now so busy is soon to vanish away. Whether they are rich or poor, honored or despised, bond or free, caressed or hated, can make no difference with them in a few years. Whether there is an eternity or not, these things are of trifling importance. How soon is the most exquisite earthly pleasure passed! The charm of the sweetest melody, how soon it dies away on the ear! The tenderest ties of friendship, how soon are they severed! The most princely wealth, how soon must it be left! The widest reputation, how soon must we cease to enjoy it! And so with the bitterest grief, the keenest sorrow, the most agonizing pain, how soon is it gone! And of what real importance are all these to the throng that is seeking them as the grand business of life? The vapor that you see in the morning as it lies on the mountain side, of what importance can it be, whether it be admired by a few more or a few less mortals, or whether it roll a little higher or a little lower, since it will soon vanish in the beams of the morning sun? So of the vapor of life. Soon is it gone; and another generation shall succeed; as to-morrow another short-lived mist shall be seen, where to-day that vanished away. The cloud that you see lie along the western sky as the sun sinks behind the hills in a summer's eve, so gorgeous, so changing, so beautiful, so lighted up with ever-varying richness of hue by the lightning of the summer eve, of what importance is it whether a few more or less tints be painted on it, or whether a few more or a few less eyes gaze upon it, for the darkness of

midnight will soon conceal it all. The insects that you see flutter in the evening rays, so happy, so calm, so still, so graceful in their motions, are moving with the shades of night to be seen no more. So move on the dense, the busy multitudes of this city! And I was about to say, O that they *were*, like that vapor, to vanish for ever; or that gorgeous cloud, to sink unconsciously into night; or the insects of the evening, to live no more! But it is not so. That vapor vanishes, and is not seen again. That changing cloud is dissipated, and the tiny nations die, not to live again. But not so with the multitudes here. To the shades of the night of death they move on, but they emerge in an immortal existence beyond; and all their great interests are there. There they begin to live. There they will live on when stars and suns cease to shine, and when rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away; when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and when the throne of God occupied by the dread Eternal King, shall be revealed. Yes, thoughtless trifler, yes, as long as God is to endure you are to live; and as sure as it is that God himself shall never die, so sure it is that *your* soul shall never cease to exist.

Now who can say that it would be irrational or undesirable that all this multitude should be simultaneously impressed with the importance of religion and the worth of the soul? Suppose it should be attended with a temporary suspension of the business, or with a permanent suspension of what now constitutes the main pleasures of this life. Is it to be deemed fanatical that the affairs of this life should be allowed to give way, for a little while, for the more important things of another world? Is this world of darkness and of sin so vastly important that none of its affairs are ever to be suspended for the purposes of another world? Is the struggle for place, and power, and wealth never to be arrested to attend to more important interests? I do not believe that a general revival of religion in our cities would interfere really with any thing necessary to their prosperity, or would cause even a temporary suspension of any thing truly valuable to the welfare of society. But if it did, shall man say that these things are *never* to be suspended to attend to more important concerns? Not thus determines the great Law-giver of men, and the best judge of what is needful for human welfare. If *his* judgment were followed, and his counsel and command obeyed, *all* labor would be suspended for one day in seven. The counting-room, the assembly-room, the places of amusement every where would be closed; the steam-boat, the car, the stage-coach, would stand still; the axe, the hammer, and the chisel would be laid aside; and the world, calm and peaceful like Eden, would give itself to the labors of charity, and to a preparation for heaven. Does God never arrest the active movements of the world in any other way? What does he when the stout man is laid on a bed of pain? What means the scene when all his worldly plans are arrested, and he is pale in death? The truth is, if man's great interests are beyond the tomb, no law of propriety is violated if these great interests are allowed to press

upon the soul, and even to arrest, if need be, his incessant care for worldly gain and for fame.

But there would be excitement, it may be said, if this great multitude were to attend to the subject of religion, and if there were a general revival. There are excitements, it is said, in all revivals. But, I pray you, is there no excitement in these cities now? From whence comes the objection that revivals are mere scenes of excitement? From that man *excited* throughout the whole week in the pursuit of gain—feverish and restless, and unacquainted for one whole hour at a time with calm thought and repose; from that man whose life is spent in the whirlwind of political controversy or in the career of ambition; from that calm and interesting group preparing for the splendid party and the dance. O *there* all is calm and serene; but in religion all is excitement and commotion! Well may this objection be heard from the excited, agitated, tumultuous population of a city; a population more than any other on earth living in scenes of excitement; unhappy when they are not excited; fostering every where the means of excitement; and resisting all the means which the friends of religion can use to bring them to sober thought and calm reflection. What we aim at is that this excitement may be laid aside, and that the now busy multitude may be brought to *think soberly* about the immortal destiny beyond the tomb. We aim that they may lay down the exciting romance or novel, and take up the Bible—full of sober truth; that they may forsake the theatre—a place of mere excitement, and find happiness in the calmness of the closet, and the sober employments of the fire-side; that they may turn away from the agitating scenes of political strife, and from the exciting of envy, and malice, and green-eyed jealousy, and ambition, and from the intoxicating bowl and the dance of pleasure, and devote themselves to the sober business of religion. Excitement, say you, in a revival! O, if Christ required me to endeavor to produce such excitement in a revival as I see every day in this city; if he required that men should give themselves up to the mere influence of feeling, and day-dreams, and agitating passions, and unfounded hopes, as they are required to by the world; I should expect to hear the objection that it was all mere excitement, and that such a work could not be the work of God. But no. I plead for soberness of thought; for calm investigation; for a state of mind where every improper emotion may be allayed, and where the soul may be brought to look calmly and soberly at the great realities of eternity. Do I address one here who does not know that such sober feeling would become the condition of man, and that it is desirable that such deep emotion should take the place of the agitated and tumultuous feelings which reign in a great community like this?

(3.) A revival of religion is desirable in cities in order to avert the wrath of God and save them from the judgments of heaven. Evils pour into our great cities like floods from all quarters of the world; and who can be ignorant of the doom of cities in times

past? It has been on cities that the most fearful of all the plagues of heaven have fallen; and not a few dilapidated walls, or half-ruined temples stand now amidst far extended ruins as monuments of the wrath of heaven. Not a few have been blotted out, and the places where they stood made pools of water or uninhabitable deserts, by the vengeance of heaven. Who can forget Sodom and Gomorrah, or Babylon, or Tyre, or Thebes, or Memphis, or Petra? And who can be ignorant of the desolations by plague and the pestilence that have swept through these abodes of congregated human guilt? The reason has been that God could smite *many* guilty there while few of the innocent would suffer. All over the world the principal monuments of the divine vengeance have been cities and large towns. Long may the walls of a city stand, but death shall have done its last work within; long may temples, like that at Baalbec, stand, while all the worshippers, long since smitten by the wrath of God, may sleep with the dead; long may a city be marked out and distinguished by its ruins and its sepulchres, like Petra, without a solitary living inhabitant, a city of the dead. All over the ancient world the plains are strewed with the ruins of cities, the monuments of indignant heaven against their follies, their pride, their luxury, and their sensuality.

We know what would have saved them. Ten righteous men would have saved one of the worst of them. Nineveh was saved by repentance; Babylon might have been spared if she had humbled herself; and Jerusalem would have been saved if she had not crucified the Son of God. Religion, prompting to temperance, and industry, and chastity, and honesty, and prayer, would have saved Babylon, and Tadmor, and Tyre, and Ephesus, and Alexandria, and Athens; and, occupying as they did the most eligible situations on earth for commerce, they might to-day have been splendid cities smiling under the favor of the Almighty.

And what can save the cities of our land? The same thing only that would have saved Gomorrah and Babylon. Let us not dream that they are beyond the wrath of God. Let us not suppose that the eyes of God are closed on the enormous masses of guilt in these abodes of congregated sinners. Babylon was once as secure as we are, and as confident of her future glory as we can be of the prosperity of this beautiful city. The inhabitants of Rome once breathed as pure an air as we do, and Tyre commanded as wide a commerce as any sea-port in our land. The God who turned Babylon into standing pools and made wild beasts cry in her desolate houses, and satyrs dance there, (Isa. 13 : 21, 22,) and who has caused the *malaria* to settle around Rome, spreading death on the once healthful plains of Italy, and has made Tyre a barren rock where the solitary fisherman dries his net, can as easily destroy *our* commerce, or fill our streets with pestilential air. Have our aged men forgotten the sad desolation of 1793, when the angel of death walked through these streets as he did once in the camp of Sennacherib? Have *we* ceased to remember the scenes in 1832, when the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that

wasteth at noon-day spread a universal gloom over this city? How easy for that God to visit us again!

(4.) I refer to one other consideration, showing the desirableness of revivals of religion in the cities of our land. I refer to their influence on future times. The question whether revivals of religion may exist there, and in what way they may be promoted, is of not less importance than any other which pertains to the welfare of our nation. Look over the map of our country. Only about two hundred years have elapsed since the foot of the pilgrim first trod these western shores. Then a vast interminable forest spread its shades all over this land—broken in upon only by the prairies or the lakes that opened their bosom to the sun, or by the floods that rolled on to the ocean. There the sound of the woodman's axe had not been heard. The vast solitude had been disturbed only by the savage war-cry. Not a bridge was thrown over the streams; not a road penetrated the deep forest; not a sail whitened these bays and seas; not a boat, save the fragile bark of birch, was upon the waters; not a city sent its hum up to heaven; not a village, save the temporary abodes of wandering savages, was on the vast landscape. Two centuries have gone, and how changed the scene! Our cities already rival those of the old world; and when some half a dozen on other continents are named, ours come next in the numbers of their population, and are already among the first in commercial importance. As if by magic they start up all over the land; and even while the remains of the forest stand around them, palaces rise, and wealth flows there as to a centre, and the din of commerce is heard afar.

Can any one fail to see in this fact the necessity of revivals of religion in those cities? How else shall it be propagated, but by that rapid mode where the Spirit of God bears the truth to the hearts of multitudes, and turns them simultaneously to God? They are adapted to the excited and ardent movement every where manifested in our land. All in those cities is free, and generous, and active, and mighty. There is an energy and zeal in the affairs of the world, which is fitted to make men great and glorious in religion as in commerce. There is an ardor that needs only to be directed to the concerns of the soul, to be adapted to the times in which we live, and to the great enterprise of the conversion of the world.

What vast multitudes are yet to swarm in those cities! What countless numbers are there to live and to die! How soon will the present busy generation be gone, to give place to another as busy, as active, as immortal! What is to be the doom of the advancing millions? That inquiry is to be answered in part by the character of the present generation, and by the answer to the question, whether the Spirit of God shall descend in glorious revivals of religion. In these streets other generations are to tread—as busy as we are. They will occupy the stores which you now occupy; dwell in the houses where you now dwell—until the time shall come for them to pull down those houses

and stores, and to build new ones for other generations to come. They will moor their vessels to the same wharves—until those vessels shall be useless, and shall give place to others. They will go forth and look upon our graves; read the letters on our tombs until they become illegible; and then *they* will lie down in the grave, to be superseded, and in their turn, too, to be forgotten. Unless some judgment is stirred up in heaven, "red with uncommon wrath," that shall sweep this city with the besom of destruction, more millions by far may yet live *here* than now comprise the whole inhabitants of our country. *We* are just beginning our career. The cities of our land are just starting into being. In the far distant future I see the shadowy forms of advancing millions of men. They are coming to enter into our houses, and churches, and stores, and to receive their impressions from what they shall find there when they arrive.

Now what I wish to say is, that these cities can be saved from being corrupting spots; concentrated pests in our land, only by the influence of religion; and religion now. Tell me, ye who doubt this, whether power and wealth saved Babylon and Rome. Tell me, whether the ship laden with gold and the merchandise of the East saved Tyre. Tell me whether philosophy and learning saved the cities of Greece and Egypt. Tell me whether the chisel of Phidias and Praxiteles saved Athens. Tell me whether the Colisaeum saved Rome, or its splendid marble structures saved Corinth. O no,—not one of them: nor will colleges, or schools, or marble palaces, or fountains, or luxury, or wealth save one of the cities of our land. Without religion they will lie as corrupt and corrupting masses on the bosom of the nation, till heaven can bear it no longer; and then *they* will be swept with the vengeance of an offended God. Religion, religion only—the pure religion of the cross—descending like floods, and flowing like rivers, only can save these cities from destruction. When we think of these things; when we look over the numbers of the cities of our land; when we remember their accumulating guilt; when we look onward to future times, and see what they are destined yet to be, and backward and see the memorials of wrath standing thick where cities once stood on the plains of the old world, how appropriate the petition of our text, "O LORD, REVIVE THY WORK, IN THE MIDST OF THE YEARS, IN THE MIDST OF THE YEARS MAKE KNOWN; IN WRATH REMEMBER MERCY!"

Entered according to Act of Congress in the Clerk's Office of the Southern District of New-York.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 3. Vol. XV.) MARCH, 1841. (Whole No. 171.

SERMON CCXCV.

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PHILADELPHIA.

REVIVALS OF RELIGION IN CITIES AND LARGE TOWNS.

No. 5. THE HINDERANCES TO REVIVALS THERE.

"*And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace.*" Luke, 19: 41, 42.

"*O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" Matt. 23: 37.

What tender and affectionate language is this! What love and compassion are here evinced! What a scene is here presented! The Son of God in tears! The Redemer weeping in view of the impending doom of a great and guilty city! Why were those tears? And why these expressions of love and tenderness? It is not difficult to answer these questions. In no situation can we well conceive of more emotions crowding into a human bosom than struggled in the heart of the Son of God, and that constrained him to weep. Before him was the capital of the nation; the temple standing with rich magnificence; the altar of sacrifice; the place where the praises of Jehovah had been celebrated for ages. In that city he had preached the Gospel, and called the inhabitants to embrace him as the Messiah—but in vain. There he had sought to turn them to God, and thus to avert the heavy doom impending over them for their sins. But all in vain. He had been there rejected, his ministry despised,

and his claims set at nought; and he saw that there the great act of national crime, which outpeers all other deeds of guilt, was about to be perpetrated—by his own murder; and that for these things the city was to be filled soon with wo, and blood, and horror; the temple fired and razed to its foundations; the imposing rites of religion to cease; and the inhabitants of the city and the land that should survive the siege to be borne into captivity, or scattered to the ends of the world, to be re-gathered to the land of their fathers no more. More than this, he saw heavy judgments impending over them as sinners; and the fearful doom awaiting the rejecters of the Son of God in the future world. For these things his eyes run down with tears; and of all the scenes of moral grandeur ever witnessed in this world, none have equalled that when the Son of God, seated on the Mount of Olives, cast his eyes over the city spread out before him, and gave vent to his feelings in a flood of tears.

I see no reason to doubt that, if he were again on earth, he would evince the same feelings in surveying the great cities that now exist. I doubt not that in Paris, in London, in Canton, in New-York, in Philadelphia, in Baltimore, in Cincinnati, he would see much that would peculiarly excite to tears. I do not see why Jerusalem was so pre-eminent either in numbers, in wickedness, or in the approaching doom of its inhabitants, as to claim exclusively the compassion and call forth the tears of the Son of God. The same thing substantially will be found to exist in all these cities as in Jerusalem; the same combined resistance of himself and his Gospel; the same concentrated wickedness; the same accumulation of vice, licentiousness, pride, and sensuality; and the same awful doom impending over the congregated masses of guilt. *One* reason of his weeping then was, that his Gospel had been there so unsuccessful. He had preached in Galilee; he had trod the shores of the lake of Gennesareth; he had proclaimed his message in numerous country villages, and among the hamlets of the poor, with eminent success. But in the great towns, in Capernaum, in Bethsaida, in Chorazin, and pre-eminently in Jerusalem, he had met with peculiar obstacles to the success of the Gospel; and which in one case called forth the heaviest denunciations which ever fell from his lips: "Wo unto thee, Chorazin; Wo unto thee, Bethsaida;" and which in the other excited him now to tears!

I derive from the text the sentiment that Christ found peculiar obstacles to the reception of his Gospel in cities and large towns; and my object at this time is to show what some of those obstacles are. My last Lecture was on the importance of revivals of religion in cities and large towns. The present Lecture will be a continuation of the same subject in general, or another aspect of it, by showing the peculiar hinderances to religion existing there, and hence the importance and necessity of REVIVALS to meet and overcome those hinderances.

I. I invite your attention, in the first place, to the obstacles to revivals arising from the very constitution or organization of cities and large towns. The idea which I wish to present is, that there is a large portion of the population that is almost entirely inaccessible by the Gospel, or designedly beyond the reach of the ordinary means of grace.

"God made the country, and man made the town," said the sweetest of British bards, though in this case with perhaps rather more truth than poetic beauty. Christ found, as has already been observed, a country and a village population accessible to the Gospel, and the triumphs of his personal ministry were mainly there. There are few, comparatively, of very elevated rank there; few in affluence. There are fewer low and debasing vices; few comparatively of the more fascinating allurements; few extended and compacted combinations of guilt; few to whom and to whose dwellings those who are disposed to do good may not find a welcome and ready access.

But the moment you enter a city, with all its external beauty and splendor; with all its courtesy and refinement; with all its science and art; nay, with all its healthful institutions of morality and religion, you are struck with the almost entire exclusion of the *extremes* of the population from all access by the Gospel and the means of grace. On the one hand there is that vast portion of a city population which may be regarded as the *lower stratum* of society—I mean that dense and dark mass, the population of alleys, and cellars, and garrets—the ignorant, the degraded, the grossly sensual, the idle, the worthless—the refuse of society, and "the offscouring of the world," always existing in a city, though often concealed from the stranger, and whose existence is disregarded, or whose condition is unknown, by that half of the race who "know not how the other half lives." Could the veil be suddenly lifted from the crime and abomination, the degraded vices and the low scenes of guilt and profligacy with which even a city like this abounds, and could we see it as the All-seeing Eye sees it, we should start back with horror, familiar as we in some degree become with it. Let an individual go at leisure through our streets, and lanes, and alleys; let him go to the foul retreats of drunkenness, gluttony, and pollution; let him look on the wretches burrowed in these foul recesses; let him look at the houses of infamy, and see the thousands that visit those houses—they alike with their inmates inaccessible to all the means of salvation, and with consciences "seared as with a hot iron,"—and he will have some idea of the obstacles which stand in the way of revivals of religion in cities. Let him think of the criminals which throng our courts and crowd our prisons; the paupers in our alms-houses, most of them made such by intemperance; the beggars patrolling our streets, whose story is, in general, but a veil to their faults; but most of

all, of that numerous banditti of thieves, robbers, swindlers, pilferers, incendiaries, burglars, and ruffians, whose concealment from the public eye alone prevents alarm—the thousands, and perhaps tens of thousands, who are here congregated and affiliated in various ways in infamy and crime, and he will be at no loss to understand some of the obstacles which exist here to the spread of all religion, and especially to revivals.

A very large portion of this class is inaccessible by any means which are used, or which can be at present used, to spread among them the Gospel. They enter no church from year to year. Many an individual has lived more than twenty years in this city and never entered a place of public worship. Multitudes of them have no Bible; or if they had, they could not read it, or would immediately pawn it to procure the means of intoxication. Multitudes of them spurn a tract, or if they did not, it would be useless to them. Multitudes of them study concealment; practise crimes which cannot be exposed to the light of day; and alike shrink away from a police-officer and from a minister of religion.

But I wish especially to remark, not on their inaccessibility, but on the fact that they are not in a condition where revivals of religion can be expected, such as I am advocating, and such as have hitherto, in general, blessed this land. The most powerful revivals of religion in this country have occurred in those places where the mass of the people are the best educated, and where they are most sober in their lives, most virtuous and industrious, and regular in their attendance on the house of God. But this has not been the general character of revivals in this land. They have been the fruits of sound instruction, and of a careful training in common-schools and in Sabbath-schools; they have occurred where the Gospel has been long and faithfully preached, and those who have been converted have been usually those whose minds have been most sedulously taught by the labors of the ministry; they have occurred eminently in our colleges and higher female seminaries—places far removed from mere enthusiasm, and places where God has made intellectual culture contribute to the purity and power of revivals. But how different all this from the wretched, untaught, and degraded population of our cities! Even, therefore, if we had access to this immense mass; if we had ministers enough to go to them and preach; or if every christian should become a missionary to them, and bear the tidings of salvation, their very ignorance and degradation would oppose a most formidable barrier to pure revivals of religion. That dark mass must be elevated; these hordes of wandering and wretched children must be gathered into schools and taught; these fountains of poison, now pouring desolation and wo into so many dwellings, must be closed; the Bible must be placed in these houses, and the inmates taught to read it; and

a long process of most self-denying instruction must be gone into, before, in our cities, there will be witnessed the revivals of purity and power which have so abundantly blessed the smaller towns and the villages of our land.

I have spoken of the low and degraded part of our population as opposing one obstacle to revivals. This is one extreme. And here is one great department of christian effort where all our prayers and all our self-denials are demanded.

But there is another class at the other extreme of society, in our great cities, that is not less inaccessible by the Gospel of Christ. It is that great department "far above these augean stables of sin and pain, which no Herculean labor can cleanse, but connected with it by innumerable doors and headlong steps. This region appears brilliant and fair; its precincts resound with hilarity, music, and songs; and it contains thousands of the opulent, the fashionable, and the gay; vice is clad in splendor here, and a spirit reigns which knows no moral law but inclination, and recognizes no god but pleasure." For guilt often treads flowery paths, and goes up the heights of honor and ambition. It reclines on a couch of ease; rests on a bed of down; puts on robes of adorning; is seen in the joyousness of the mazy dance; and moves amidst the civilities and courtesies of refined life. For this class distant climes pour in their luxuries; the theatre opens its doors; splendid mansions rise—the cost of tens of thousands of dollars—with gorgeous decorations, to furnish places for dances and revelry; for this class art is exhausted; night becomes more brilliant than day; and the cup of pleasure is drunk deep and long, and music lavishes her charms to give pleasure to the ear and joy to the heart. In such circles we look in vain for prayer; for the serious reading of the Bible; for an anxious concern for the soul; for a humble and penitent sitting at the feet of the Redeemer. And we look as really in vain there for solid happiness. What are often the characteristics of such circles? It is a world of splendor without enjoyment; of professions without sincerity; of flattery without heart; of gayety which mocks the real feelings of the soul; and of smiles when the heart is full of envy and chagrin; a cup of hilarity whose dregs are wormwood and gall; scenes of momentary pleasure to be succeeded by long nights of painful reminiscences and by despair. There is "restless pride without gratification; ostentation without motive or reward; ceremony without comfort; laughter without joy; smiles which conceal rancor; vociferous praise alloyed with envy, and dying away with the whispers of calumny;" and compliance with the laws of fashion which are hated; and a servitude to customs where the chains eat deep into the flesh. Think you that these people, "whose every step appears light and airy as the radiant footstep of Aurora,—whose very form and features are luminous with contentment and hope," are happy? Do

they live on in a continual round of unmingled enjoyment? No. The immortal mind is not thus made. The brilliance of these things strikes the eye, but conveys no pleasure to the heart; and in the very midst of all this external show and glitter, the conscience, true to itself and to God, may be uttering the language of rebuke, and the recollection of all this folly may bathe the cheek and the pillow in tears.

But my principal object is not to remark on the folly of these scenes: for, so far as their fellow-mortals are concerned, men and women have a right to spend their money and be as foolish as they please; nor do I wish to remark on the hollowness of all this, and its destitution of happiness, but on the fact that it stands in the way of revivals, and of religion, in all forms. Unlike the other description of the population of a city already adverted to, in most respects they are like them in this. Thousands of them are as ignorant of the Gospel as they are. The Bible is indeed in their habitations, but it is not read; not because they cannot read it, but because they will not. They enter no sanctuary; and no one bears the Gospel to them. A nominal connection may be held with some christian congregation to secure some right of burial—for there is some thinking about death as a matter in which property is involved—but they are strangers to the house of God. Many a splendid mansion in this city is tenanted by those who enter no house of worship. And who carries the Gospel to them? Who tells them that they have a soul? Who reminds them that they are going to the judgment-bar, or to hell? Alas! the messenger that bears the Tract to the humble mansion of the poor, is often turned rudely away from the splendid abode of the rich. The minister of religion goes not there; for to do it would be to violate a law of etiquette, which, as a stranger, he may not disregard; or, if he goes, daunted, it may be, by wealth, and splendid furniture, and rank, and perhaps by high intellectual endowment, he seeks to relieve his conscience by some time-serving message; speaks, if at all, in flattering accents of the cross, and would quail before an anticipated frown or rebuke, should he faithfully speak of sin and of the judgment to come. In scenes like these, too, who looks for friendship for revivals of religion? Who is disappointed to find them regarded there as wildfire, fanaticism, and disorder? In the character, therefore, the habits, the manners, the inaccessibility of these large classes of a city population, is found the first obstacle to revivals of religion in a city, and is an obstacle which nothing but the mighty power of God can overcome.

II. A second great hinderance to revivals, growing out of the nature of a city organization, arises from what may properly be called the want of *sympathy*, or *common ties* in such a community. It strikes a stranger as singular, that people separated only by the wall of a dwelling should be strangers to each other; and that in a dense and crowded population there should not be the strongest

conceivable ties binding together man and man. Yet the estrangement and want of acquaintance are familiar; and it would not be difficult to explain it; but the fact itself is all that is needful to our purpose now. All know that neighbors are often strangers; and that the mere fact of worshipping in the same church edifice, or of sitting down at the table of the same Master, does not of necessity produce acquaintanceship, and create bonds of sympathy and love. Almost unavoidably, different ranks of life, even in the church, keep separate from each other; often there is a melancholy coldness and distance that is chilling to a stranger, or to a warm-hearted christian; and while there may be, and usually is, no *bad* feeling, and no root of bitterness, yet there is the want of that intimate acquaintanceship, and that strong common sympathy which Christ contemplated when he prayed for his disciples "that they all might be one," and of that actual and active love which he contemplated when he commanded them to "love one another, as the Father had loved him," and which was so striking among the early christians when the heathen persecutors were constrained to say, "Behold how these christians love one another!"

Now revivals of religion are not caused by mere sympathy; but, as I have endeavored in a former Lecture to show, they call into action some of the most powerful and pervading sympathies of our nature. They are closely connected with the fact that God has grouped men together into families, circles of friendship, neighborhoods, and churches. They are intimately connected with the fact, that when one part of the social circle is affected, either by joy or grief, the emotion kindles from heart to heart, and family to family, and circle to circle, until the whole community is pervaded by a common feeling. And where in a community there are, if I may so speak, independent *strata* of society, it often happens in a revival that one is affected and not another; where all have common sympathies and feelings, all partake of the common emotion. That this should be found in a country population where men are, in general, on the same level; where every man knows his neighbor, and is accustomed to sympathize in all his wants, and woes, and joys; where difference of rank never separates them; and where the joy of conversion will strike a responsive cord throughout the community, is not to be wondered at. That such might not be the case in the population of a city, and especially in a city church, I shall not deny. I speak only of *the fact* as it actually exists.

I can never, while "life, and breath, and being last, or immortality endures," forget the time when God was pleased to bless my labors in a most remarkable and extensive revival of religion in a large country congregation. I had at its commencement some five hundred members of the church, and near five hundred families that were nominally connected with my charge, covering a region of country nearly ten miles in diameter. For more than a hundred years the Gospel had been faithfully preached there, and with eminent success. Revival after revival had crowned those labors;

and since the days when God so blessed this land under the ministry of Whitefield, Edwards, and the Tennants, scarce ten years had elapsed in which there had not been a revival there. At the time I speak of, a simultaneous impression was produced, under the ordinary preaching of the Gospel, on the entire community. It was a state of increasing seriousness, and of attention to the preaching of the Gospel. There was an unusual spirit of prayer; a deep anxiety on the part alike of the pastor and of the church members for the salvation of souls. The emotions deepened, until the heart became full; and all in the community were willing to converse on the subject of religion. Scenes of amusement and pastime gradually gave way to the deep business of religion; no voice was raised in opposition; no noise, no disorder characterized the places where men had assembled to ponder the great question of their salvation. On all the extended community an influence had come down silent as the sun-beams, and gentle and refreshing as the dews of heaven. There was deep sympathy in all that community; a calm, subdued, serious, and holy spirit of conversation, which showed that the "God of peace" was there.

Who can doubt that if such a power were to descend on the population that occupies the same extent of territory here;—if the same heavenly influence should pervade the two hundred thousand here that pervaded the comparatively few hundreds there; and if the same deep inquiry were to exist here on the topics pertaining to our eternal welfare;—if the effect were to be seen in closing the places of sinful amusement, in directing the steps of the guilty to the house of God, and in bringing out the lost and loathsome victims of crime, and lust, and disease, to the light of heavenly day; and in filling the mansions of the rich and the gay with the sweet peace of religion, and of holy communion with God, who can doubt that such a scene would be in accordance with man's exalted nature, and would be a spectacle on which hovering angels would look with wonder, gratitude, and joy? But, alas! tens of thousands here are far away from any such heavenly influence; thousands sneer at the name of revivals, and perhaps some hundreds of professed christians would have no sympathy in such a work of grace.

III. I mention as a third obstacle resulting from the nature of a city organization, the fact that wickedness is concentrated, organized, and embodied there. If there is any peculiar guilt on earth, it will be found there. If there is any that can exist only by combination and alliance; any that depends on confederacy and organization; any that shrinks from the light of day, it would be found in the large capitals of the world. If there is any crime peculiarly dark, deep, offensive, loathsome in the sight of heaven, it will be found in such places. If Satan has any strongholds which he fortifies with peculiar care, and guards with peculiar vigilance, they are the large cities of the world. In all ages they have constituted, as they do now, the principal obstructions to the spread of religion;

and many, many a city has been doomed to destruction by God on account of its consummate wickedness, and because there was no other way to maintain his religion here below, than to sweep it with the besom of his wrath. So it was with the cities of the plain—in the time of Abraham the principal barriers to the progress of righteousness, and the very *sewers* of iniquity. So it was with Babylon—the proud oppressor—doomed to ruin irretrievable and eternal, on account of its pride, cruelty, and opposition to God. So, as has already been remarked, Christ found the principal obstructions to *his* preaching in Chorazin, in Bethsaida, in Capernaum, and in Jerusalem. There was consummate wisdom in the plan of the builders of Babel when they said, "Go to, let us build US A CITY and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven;" (Gen. 11 : 4;) for the very object of building a city was to contravene the Divine purpose, and to set God at defiance; as it would seem, almost, had been often the design in the great cities of the world.

Since that time, it would almost seem as if the design for which they had been founded had been to concentrate evil, and oppose religion on the earth. Tacitus long since described Rome as the *colluvies gentium—the sink of nations*—a description, the truth of which no one will doubt who is familiar with his history, or that of Gibbon. Dr. Johnson in a similar manner characterized London.

> London! the needy villain's general home,
> The common sewer of Paris and of Rome!
> With eager thirst, by folly or by fate,
> Sucks in the dregs of each corrupted state.
>
> All that at home no more can beg or steal,
> Or like a gibbet better than a wheel;
> Hiss'd from the stage, or hooted from the court,
> Their air, their dress, their politics import;
> Obsequious, artful, voluble and gay,
> On Britain's fond credulities they prey. LONDON.

That beautiful poet, too, who perhaps never erred in describing the characters and customs of men, or of society—Cowper—has told us what a city is in the following lines:

> Thither flow,
> As to a common and most noisome sewer,
> The dregs and feculence of every land.
> In cities, foul example in most minds
> Begets its likeness. Rank abundance breeds
> In gross and pampered cities; sloth, and lust,
> And wantonness, and gluttonous excess.
> In cities, vice is hidden with most ease,
> Or seen with least reproach; and virtue, taught
> By frequent lapse, can hope no triumph there
> Beyond the achievements of successful flight.
> I do confess them nurseries of the arts,
> In which they flourish most; where in the beams
> Of warm encouragement, and in the eye
> Of public note, they reach their perfect size.
> Such London is, by taste and wealth proclaimed
> The fairest capital of all the world,
> By riot and incontinence the worst. TASK, B. 1.

On this fact, in regard to cities as they have always existed, it would be needless here to dwell. Beautiful as they often are; rich, splendid, magnificent; the home of refinement, of courtesy, and accomplishment; the seats of science, and the nurse of the arts; I add, too, with thankfulness to God, the home often of deep piety and rich and liberal-hearted benevolence; yet they are the home, also, of every kind of infamy, of all that is false and hollow, and of all that fascinates, allures, and corrupts the hearts of men. There are found men of all nations, colors, characters, opinions. There men of splendid talents live to corrupt by their example and their influence; there unbounded wealth is lavished to amuse, betray, and ruin the soul; there are the vortices of business and of pleasure that engulf all; and there are the most degraded and the worst forms of human depravity.

I speak here particularly of sins of combination and alliance, of sins *so* allied and interlocked that nothing can meet and destroy them but the mighty power of God in a revival of religion; sins which stand peculiarly opposed to the prevalence of religion. The infidel in the country village usually stands almost alone. He may gather a few disciples; but their *character* usually testifies to the nature of the opinions held, and prevents the extension of the evil. In this land, a frowning public opinion usually rests on him and his doctrines. But in this city, he may make as many converts as he pleases. He may *always* find enough to gratify his vanity as a leader; always find enough to enable him to brave public opinion, and to keep him in countenance. The man of profaneness in the country village is usually almost alone. He mocks and curses his Maker with few to countenance him, and the burning *lens* of public indignation usually meets him wherever he goes. If he has a few companions *they* are known, and their known character is a sort of check on the extension of the profaneness. But not so in the city. If he chooses to curse his Maker, he can do it when he pleases, and be sustained by as many as he chooses. If he prefers to do it on the wharves and in the gutters, he will find enough there to countenance him; if he chooses to do it in the streets, alas, he may find a patron every where, and can scarce turn a corner without being greeted by a fellow-laborer in the work of cursing. If he prefers to think that it is an accomplishment for a gentleman, he will find gentlemen enough—so called,—who will keep him in countenance. In the country village or neighborhood the licentious young man is known. His character is understood; and he is usually a solitary monument of infamy. There is no organization for the purposes of licentiousness. The deed of wickedness is solitary, marked, hated. But what shall I say of a city—of all cities? Who can guage this evil there, and report to us the estimate? Who can acquaint us with the organizations designed to prevent impurity of life and

licentiousness of morals? Who can take any accurate census of the actual number of abandoned females; who of this far greater number of abandoned men—young and old—who are living in gross violation of the laws of heaven? Every great metropolis of the world in this respect bears a striking resemblance to Sodom; and it is matter of amazement that every great city does not meet its righteous doom. I might go over the whole catalogue of crimes that are marked on the calendar of human guilt, and we should find them all concentrated, organized, consolidated in our cities and large towns. There foul and offensive exhalations rise from the receptacles of human depravity; there volumes of curses roll up toward heaven; there the seducer practises his arts to inveigle the young; there tens of thousands riot in intemperance and curse their Maker; there multitudes practise all arts of fraud and infamy; and there Satan, knowing the power of cities in all the surrounding regions, has established his strongholds, and fortifies and guards his possessions with all that skill and art can do.

Now, it is not so much to affirm that the proportion of the wicked in cities is greater than in the country, that I have dwelt on this point; it is to fix the attention on two or three features of the fact directly bearing on the subject before us.

One is, that sin exists here in combination and alliance. It is not dissocial and solitary. It is united, and interlocked, and interwoven with numerous customs of society. The *point* of my remarks, therefore, is, that sin in cities presents a solid front to the Gospel of Christ. It is kept in countenance. It resists the Gospel, confident that it *may* be resisted. Hence the necessity of revivals of religion. O what shall ever meet and destroy this combined and consolidated wickedness, but the power of the Spirit of God descending on the whole community in answer to the prayers of christians, and inclining these ten thousand alienated hearts to seriousness and to God!

Another feature is, that the arrangements for sin in a city peculiarly contemplate the young. Well does the enemy of God know that the church looks to them for its increase. Its hopes are these. Its prospects of purity, fervor, and of the final conquest of the world, are these. Cast an eye now over a city, and ask for whom are the institutions of sin, licentiousness, and intemperance designed? Who are to be the victims? Who is to sustain them? Not much care is shown to propitiate the aged. Age has few passions that can be excited; and it is either fixed in principle beyond the hope of being seduced to profligacy, or it is already corrupt and ruined. An old man must soon leave the stage of action, and, whether virtuous or vicious, his opinions cannot long influence the world. Not so the young. There are passions in youth that may easily be enkindled; there are alluring arts that may readily be made to decoy them; and the wicked

world looks to *them* to patronize and sustain them. Who is to sustain the numberless dram-shops licensed here under the authority of the laws in our city, and to license the future drunkards whose oaths and blasphemy are to roll up towards heaven? Our sons, if ten thousand arts of the tempter can break them away from the restraints of home, and can neutralize the effect of Sabbath-school instruction, and put back parental prayers unheard. Who are to be the patrons of the theatre? Your sons and daughters; and unless the love of pleasure can be implanted more than the love of God, soon might their doors be closed, to be opened no more. Thus every vice looks to the young for patronage; and ten thousand arts concentrate their influence to alienate the young from God, and to draw them down to death. Another feature is the ease with which guilt here may be concealed. The most powerful protection of virtue in the country is public opinion, and the assurance that the guilty there cannot escape from it. An eye of public vigilance is on every man, and his character is known and understood. Not so here. The guilty may flee away from every being but God, and practise his deeds of evil unknown. In a cellar, a garret, or a palace, at his pleasure, he may hide himself, and who can drag him out to the light of day? What is more, he may *so* conceal his guilt that his infamy shall not be suspected; or what is more and worse still, he may so combine with others as to modify public opinion, *and make virtue cease to blush when she gives him the hand.*

When one looks on these facts he will cease to wonder that cities have every where presented formidable obstacles to revivals of religion. One question I have to submit, in conclusion, to those who bear the name of christian. It is, whether their hearts would feel any joy at a work of grace that should pervade all this population, and fill these streets and dwellings with seriousness and the fear of God? A heathen monarch of a much greater city than this, once rose up from his throne, and covered himself with sackcloth, and was followed by his court and nobles, and by all the people, in a solemn fast for three days. Who adjudges that the bosom of the king of Nineveh in this was swayed by any improper feeling? Another heathen monarch, at the head of two millions of men, sat down and wept. In an hundred years, said he, all that mighty host will be dead. The vision of Xerxes extended no farther. He had no tear to shed over their doom beyond the grave. How different that feeling from the view which excited the Redeemer to weep! *His* tears fell because he could see beyond the tomb; because he saw the unending career of the never-dying soul; and knew what it was if the soul should be lost. And this multitude that *we* see in this city; this gay, busy, thoughtless, volatile, unthinking throng that sweep along these streets, or that dwell in these palaces, or that crowd these theatres or these assembly-rooms,

where, O where, will they be in a hundred years? Dead; all dead. Every eye will have lost its lustre; every frame its vigor; every rose shall have faded from the cheek; the charms of music shall no more entrance the ear; the fingers shall have forgotten the melody of the lute and the organ. Where will they be? In yonder heaven, or in yonder hell—part, alas! how small a part! with ears attuned to sweeter sounds, and with eyes radiant with immortal brilliancy, and with a frame braced with the vigor of never-dying youth. Part, alas! how large a part! in that world, a view of whose unutterable sufferings drew tears from the eyes of the Son of God! Each man that dares to curse JEHOVAH on his throne; each victim of intemperance and lust; each wretch on which the eye fastens in the lowest form of humanity, has an immortal nature that shall live beyond the stars, and that shall survive when "the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll!" The shadowy vale of death will soon be past, and the thoughtless and guilty throngs will be found amid the severe and awful scenes of eternal justice! Christian, pray, pray, O pray for a REVIVAL OF PURE RELIGION IN THE GUILTY CITIES OF OUR LAND.

SERMON CCXCVI.

BY REV. ALBERT BARNES.

No. 6. THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS IN REGARD TO REVIVALS THERE.

"*Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.*" Acts, 17: 16.

Two very opposite effects are produced on different minds by difficulties and embarrassments. One is to dispirit and dishearten, the other is to animate with augmented ardor and zeal. The former is the effect produced on the mass of mind; the latter is that produced on the few. The multitude become intimidated, and give over effort as hopeless; the few who are bold and resolute, who act from the convictions of principle and conscience, or who see a prize worth exertion, are stimulated to greater efforts by every new difficulty, and develope resources of invention and talent before unknown to themselves, and surprising to their friends. This it is to be great; and this constitutes the real greatness of the few who have deserved and received the name.

The record of the visit of the Apostle Paul at Athens furnishes an illustration of this principle; and I know not that a better one can be found. It was the first time when he had been there; but not the time when he first learned its fame. He himself had been born in a city whose schools rivalled those of Athens; and there is reason to think that at some period of his life he had been familiar with the more distinguished classic productions in the Greek language; and he was certainly not disqualified for appreciating the eloquence, and the elegant arts of that city. Longinus thus speaks of Paul: "The following men are the boast of all eloquence, and of Grecian genius, viz. Demosthenes, Lysias, Æschines, Hyperides, Isæus, Anarchus, Isocrates, and Antiphon, *to whom may be added Paul of Tarsus*," certainly qualified to appreciate what to a classic mind must have been interesting, nay, almost entrancing, in Athens. Her schools, her academic groves, her wonders of art, it might have been supposed, would have attracted the attention of such a mind. What an opportunity of examining for the first, and perhaps the last time, the immortal works of Phidias and Praxiteles! What an opportunity for mingling in the circles of the most refined society in the world! How vain would it appear to be for such a stranger, a solitary and unknown man, to attempt to produce a change in the religious condition of that city, or to produce there a revival of religion!

The effect on his mind of a survey of the state of things there is described in my text. "His spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." The spirit of Paul was roused here, as it was every where, by the prevalence of sin, and he was led to put forth augmented efforts, in view of the very difficulties before him.

In this instance we have an illustration of the feelings which a christian should cherish in the midst of a great city. They were feelings such as Paul himself cherished in the midst of gay and voluptuous Corinth, when he resolved that he would know nothing there save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;—which he had in Ephesus, where he labored so assiduously for the overthrow of idolatry, and for the conversion of its multitudes to God; and which he had in Antioch, in Philippi, and in Rome. I wish at this time, from the feelings thus manifested by Paul, to offer some remarks on the duties of christians in cities and large towns, particularly with reference to revivals of religion; and I shall set my views before you in a series of observations all bearing on this point, to show what christians ought to do to promote revivals of religion in such places.

I. My first observation is, that religion first showed its power, and especially in revivals of religion, in cities and large towns. There the Gospel met every form of human wickedness, and showed its power to triumph over all. In Jerusalem, the seat of pharisai-

cal pride and hypocrisy, and of dependence on the mere forms of religion; in Antioch, the rich and commercial emporium of Syria, and the seat of all the affluence and luxury that commerce produces; in Ephesus, the strongest hold of idolatry, and the place to which tens of thousands resorted to pay their worship at the shrine of the most splendid temple in the heathen world; in Philippi, long the capital of Macedonia, and filled with all the sins that usually pertain to court; in Corinth, the most gay, and voluptuous, and sensual, and dissipated city of the age—the Paris of antiquity; and in Rome itself, the capital of the world, and like London, the common sewer of the nations, as it was characterized by Tacitus; in all these places the Gospel showed its power, and achieved its earliest triumphs. In each one of these flourishing churches were established, and in each one, under the apostolic preaching, were witnessed all the phenomena that characterize religion now.

It must continue to be so, till the whole world is converted to God. Cities are, and will be, the centres of moral power; and their influence must be felt over all other portions of the world. Missionaries now go to great cities just as the apostles did, and begin their work there. It is in such places as Constantinople, and Jerusalem, and Calcutta, and Canton, and Bankok, and Cairo, that the triumphs of the Gospel are expected; and to secure such places of influence is deemed as needful as it is for an invading army to seize upon the strong fortresses of a land. In our own country, therefore, and in other lands, christians are to labor and pray now, as the apostles did, for the promotion of religion in cities and large towns.

II. My second remark is, that there is the same need of a revival of pure religion in these places, that there was in the cities that were visited by the apostles, and the same things to excite christians to effort for their conversion which there was then. Were Paul to come now and visit this city, or any of the great cities of our land, as he did Athens, what would he find? What honor would he see put on God? What would he see to be the great and prevalent object of living? And what, with his recorded views of the character of men, and of the final destiny of the guilty, would he regard as the doom of the multitudes here? We may take this great city as a fair and favorable specimen of the character of the cities of our land. What would he find here? He would find indeed no idols, and no temples reared to false gods. Thanks to the God of our fathers, who directed hitherward the steps of men who feared his name, not an idol god has been made, nor an idol temple reared, since the white man first penetrated the forests of the new world; and amidst all the works of art in our cities, the chisel of the sculptor has never been employed to engrave a god of stone. But in this city he would find more than an hundred thousand people without any form or semblance of religion. They enter no sanctuary; they worship no God, true or false. They have not

even gone so far as to rear, as the Athenians did, an altar "to the unknown God,"—the unknown God, amidst their rabble of divinities, who, they supposed, had come to save them from the pestilence. Along these streets the pestilence has also spread, perhaps in as frightful a form as that described by Thucydides in Athens; and God, the true God, has interposed to save; but the multitude that were spared erected no altar to their unknown God to commemorate the event. He might go into some thousands of houses, and he would find no shrines, no Lares, no Penates, no form or mode of devotion. He would find their inmates devoted to *idols*, but idols without temples, save the temple of the heart. To Mammon or to Bacchus he might find them devoted, with an ardor never witnessed in Athens; but to these they have erected no altars. He would find many a splendid house where dwells a whole family with no form of devotion; who enter no sanctuary; who have no Sabbath except for amusement; who live as though it were not worth inquiry or argument whether there be a God and an eternity. He would find many who live to feast on the bounties of Providence without thanksgiving; who riot on the verge of the grave unalarmed; and who attend even their departed friends to the tomb with no more personal anxiety about their own preparation to die, than though the inscription made on the entrance to a cemetery in the capital of France during the revolution, "Death is an eternal sleep," were settled to be the truth, and ought to be inscribed over every dwelling-place of the dead. But are they idolaters? As degrading, and often as sunken as though they worshipped blocks of wood and stone, for they fix on other objects the affection due to God. Many even in this city have sunk to a depth of debasement to which the vilest form of idolatry rarely consigns its votaries; for even a *bad* religion has *some* restraints—irreligion has none. Part worship wealth, part fashion; part do homage to low and debasing pleasures. And amidst the idol worship of Athens there was not a more effectual exclusion of the true God from the soul, than there is from the hearts and habitations of tens of thousands in this city.

III. My third remark is, that it is chiefly on christians that dependence can be placed to rouse the great and thoughtless multitudes of a city population to a sense of their guilt and danger. I say *chiefly;* for though we may hope something from the effects of the various dispensations of Providence in afflictions in arousing men; though we may rely somewhat on the fact that the consciences of men may be alarmed in view of their guilt and danger, and in the prospect of death; though we may hope that thoughtful inquiry may be aroused by the Divine Spirit in some minds without any visible means used; and though we may hope that some of the great mass may from time to time become sick of the vain world, and in their disgust inquire whether there is not comfort to be found in religion, yet the main hope is, that christians will use their influence to bear the truth to them, con-

vince them of their danger and their folly, and direct them to the Lamb of God. I say *christians*—meaning to include in this term the ministers of religion—with all the influence which can be derived from personal piety, learning, and eloquence, and all that can be derived from the respect which their office creates; other officers of the churches, with all the influence which their office creates, and with all that their private worth can add to their official influence; Sabbath-school teachers, with all the advantages which are furnished them from their access to the hearts of large numbers of the young; christian parents, with all that there is of authority and tenderness in their relation to their children—all of which should be tributary to the Gospel; christian physicians, with all the influence which they may have in the houses of the sick and the dying; christian magistrates, with all the power of their office in restraining vice and recommending virtue; the aged with their ripe experience, the young with their ardor, and the middle-aged with the maturity of their judgment; man with his energy and talent, and woman with her patience and tenderness in visiting the abodes of poverty and want. These constitute the reliance, under God, in promoting religion among the thoughtless masses of a city population. They are the enrolled, the disciplined, and the officered army which has been appointed here to fight the battles of the Lord. This constitutes the organization for all that is lovely and of good report against the numerous organizations for evil in a city like this: and this is what the Saviour relies on in the great work of securing for himself those centres of influence and power. They can feel, and should feel for the condition of those around them. They have influence and power given them for this end by the Head of the church. In Athens, Paul was probably the only man who had any just view of the guilt and danger of the multitudes that thronged the streets of that city; the only man that had any just view of God, and any knowledge of the plan of redemption; and the only hope of rousing that vast population of idolaters rested on the voice of this solitary stranger, a man unknown and without influence, or if known, despised. It is not so here. God has placed here more than twenty thousand, all of whom, according to their professions, should have the same feelings as Paul had in Athens. They profess the same religion; they worship the same God; they have, or should have, the same views of the guilt and danger of man, and of the necessity to be prepared to meet God. They are each one in possession of the same knowledge of the plan of salvation, and of the same hope of heaven; and there is not one of them, old or young, who is not, or should not be able to tell his neighbor the way by which he might be made everlastingly happy. Every parent can tell this to his children; and every Sabbath-school teacher to his scholars; and every man to his neighbor, to the poor, to the outcast, and to the vile. And how obvious it is, that, in the possession of this knowledge, it is their duty to seek that the whole population should be pervaded with christian influence, or that there

should be a revival of religion spreading throughout this entire community! It is as if the pestilence had come in upon the whole population, and was cutting off the inhabitants at a fearful rate every day, and God has intrusted to twenty thousand the knowledge of one infallible remedy for the disease. Who would feel himself blameless if a single one should die by his neglecting to communicate a knowledge of that remedy?

IV. My fourth observation is, that in cities and large towns christians are exposed to peculiar temptations and dangers.

Temptations to unfaithfulness exist every where. The country village has its temptations, and the city has its own. Which are the greatest, it is not needful now to inquire. The only point of inquiry before us here is, what dangers beset christians in cities and large towns? Especially what dangers in regard to the direct efforts for the promotion of religion? What is there to chill and paralyze our efforts in reference to the cause of revivals?

There are many; and to show the nature of all those temptations and dangers fully, would far transcend the proper limits of a whole discourse, and can here only be glanced at. They are such as the following:

1. The danger of being soon discouraged by the magnitude of the evils around us. They are so numerous, and they pertain to so many subjects, and they are so fortified by prevalent customs, that the spirit of christians soon sinks and faints within them. To rouse a city—to promote a reformation there—to secure a general revival of religion, seems like an attempt to lade out the ocean, or like an effort to remove quicksand where it fills in as fast as you remove it.

2. We become familiar with the evils, and cease to feel appalled by their magnitude. A warm-hearted christian on going to Paris is shocked and pained at the gayety and licentiousness there; a christian from the country is shocked at the amount of sin in a great city, and pained at the condition of its thoughtless thousands; a young convert, just from his first view of the cross, and of the dying Saviour, and with his vivid conceptions of the worth of the soul, weeps over the condition of the tens of thousands around him, and feels, like young Melancthon, that he can persuade them all to turn to God. But how soon, as a general rule, does your stranger christian in Paris, and he that comes to us from the country, and the young convert, lose all this ardor! these thousands we see walk the streets almost forgetting that they have souls. The young and the accomplished we see crowd the abodes of fashion, and we seem to forget that for them Christ died, or that there can be for such gay and happy throngs any such places as a sick bed or a grave; the rich we see roll along in splendor, and cease to feel almost that there is a God before whom they must appear, and a hell where the rich man that is impenitent will lift up his eyes in torment; and soon we sleep as calmly in our beds as though all this multitude were on the way to heaven.

3. We are appalled by the fact that evils are *combined* and *confederated*, and that it seems almost hopeless to attempt to break them up. It is not that you have to meet an army of profane men, and that when they are reformed the field is clear, and the victory gained. It is not that you must meet a host of Sabbath-breakers, and that when they are restrained the victory is won. It is not that we must ferret out and reform some thousands of the impure and licentious, and that then the work is done. It is not that you must vanquish an army of atheists, and infidels, and scoffers, and that when you have convinced them of the truth of christianity the task is completed. Nor is it that you must meet with fashion, and vanity, and the love of the world, and substitute for all this the love of God. The difficulty is, that THEY ARE ALL IN THE FIELD TOGETHER. They are parts of one great army—the army of the foe of God; they are under the control of one master mind—the great apostate spirit—that marshals them for his war against virtue and against God; and unless *all* are driven from the field the victory cannot be won; and seeing this, christians soon become disheartened. Connected with this is the fact that sins are interlocked and confederated together. They never appear alone. You cannot meet one form of evil by itself, and destroy it as if it were alone. When, for example, you make war on intemperance, it is not on intemperance alone. It is a war at the same time on avarice and covetousness, and on all the forms of traffic and of business by which it is sustained, and on all the customs and vices that walk in the train of intemperance. You make war on profaneness, and licentiousness, and Sabbath-breaking, and the theatre, and on the love of money in some of its worst forms, more than half of all which evils are connected with indulgence in intoxicating liquors. How long could a theatre be sustained if intoxicating drinks were not accessible? How few, comparatively, would be profane if they were never excited by intoxicating drinks? And how closely connected are intemperance and licentiousness every where? Attack one form of sin any where, and you attack a host of affiliated vices, and all their friends are roused to oppose you. Cicero long since remarked that there was "a common bond" among the virtues. They are united—a family of sisters—always strengthening each other—always found in each other's company, and always diffusing around smiles and joy. They are like a *parterre* of commingled flowers, when you breathe the fragrance emitted by them all. And so there is a common bond among vices. They are of one family, of one bad parentage. When you meet with one you may be sure that others are not far off—not, indeed, a family harmonious and happy, like the virtues, but still united and associated. You cannot meet one without rousing up all; and hence the difficulty every where of putting down vice and promoting a reformation, and hence the friends of virtue become intimidated and appalled.

4. A fourth danger in cities is, that of conformity to the evil customs which prevail around us. I do not mean that christians,

whom God has set in cities to carry forward his work and to save souls, fall into open sin; but I refer to what the Bible calls "conformity to the world." There is a great deal of piety in the world—in the main connected with honest intentions—that is like the chameleon, taking its hue from surrounding objects. Or I may use, perhaps, a better illustration. It is like a precious gem set in a foil. The jeweller spreads beneath it a colored substance, and the jem partakes of that color. It sparkles and is beautiful. It has an original beauty, but its peculiar hue is borrowed from the foreign substance in which it is embedded. Not a little of the religion of the world is like this gem. It is genuine, and in itself beautiful and valuable. But it borrows its appearance from the things around it, and when the *setting* happens to be bad, the whole brilliancy is gone, and the beauty disappears. In a high state of religious feeling in a church, or in a time of revival, that religion sparkles like the diamond. When the christian church is roused to seek the salvation of the world—when a pure love flows from heart to heart—when all are engaged in promoting the salvation of sinners, then it shines brilliant as a gem of the purest water. But when the church slumbers, and its zeal languishes, and iniquity abounds, then it is a precious stone badly set, and the dark foil dims all its lustre and mars all its beauty. It requires a high order of religion *not* to be conformed to the world. We are with the people of this world; we transact business with them; we converse with them; we are invited to partake with them of the pleasures in which they find their only enjoyment; we mingle with them in the social circle; we "catch the manners living as they rise," and we suffer the world of vanity and fashion to give us laws about the style of living, and conversation, and dress, and amusement. Piety that would have shone with the brilliancy of the diamond in the persecution of Nero or of Mary, may be dull and dim while the world caresses and flatters; and zeal, that would beam like that of a seraph were the whole church alive to God, sinks away into a flickering and almost expiring flame when the church slumbers. In no place does the world have such influence over christians—or rather, perhaps, I ought to say, in no place is there so much danger of the influence—as in cities. In such places eminently "iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold."

5. Connected with this is a fifth danger, in regard to the mass of christians. It is seen in a disposition to palliate sin, or to apologize for it; or to speak of it in language that shall not imply reproof. The nomenclature of sins, like that of chemistry, is often changed; and the characteristics of an age can often be determined by the appellations given to vice. An age of great refinement—the golden or tinsel age of society—is often characterized by great fastidiousness and great delicacy—in plainer language, great *prudishness*. Crimes change names; faults are apologized for under names that border on virtue; and words which suggest the idea of *sin* or *wrong*, are exchanged for names that sug-

gest any thing but the thing referred to; and so the gay and the christian world together "wrap it up." When iniquity abounds; when it goes up into places of affluence and rank, the world demands the language of gentleness and apology. "Prophesy unto us smooth things" becomes the common wish; and the kind of reproof, and fidelity in preaching, where things are called by their right names, and where the iniquity of the heart is laid open, and men are warned with appropriate earnestness to flee from the wrath to come, is set down as fanaticism and extravagance. How difficult it is to reach some far-pervading sins in the community, sins that endanger the salvation of thousands in all our cities, and how difficult to rouse christians to a sense of their existence, or the dangers that attend their indulgence!

I had hoped to have had time to speak of other dangers of the members of the churches in regard to the promotion of religion in our cities, arising from the love of gain; from the temptations to neglect secret prayer; from the tendencies to neglect the careful study of the Bible; from the fact that the impressions made by preaching are so soon obliterated from the mind by business and the influence of the world; and I would have spoken also of the difficulties of promoting religion, from the organized resistances, and from the want of the kind of social influences that prevail in country neighborhoods and villages. But I have already trenched much on the time that should have been allotted to what was designed to be the leading purpose of this discourse. That remains to be considered; and a few brief hints must now be all.

V. It is, the duties of christians in cities in regard to the promotion of revivals of religion. They are such as the following:

1. To form and cherish just views about the possibility, the desirableness, and the importance of revivals of religion here. It is not too much to suppose that large numbers of professing christians in the different churches have no definite views on these points. They have never made them a matter of distinct thought or inquiry. They have never gone to the New Testament to find out what was *done* in the time of the Saviour and the apostles, and what was said about the possibility and the value of such works of grace. Perhaps many have obtained all the views which they have ever had of such works of grace from the observation of foreign tourists, or from the tone of the worldly society around them. And it is to be feared that not a few professing christians in all churches in cities regard, at heart, revivals of religion as of doubtful value, or as scenes of wild-fire and fanaticism. Is it uncharitable to ask how many christians there are in any of our churches that would stand up amidst the rich and the gay, in the brilliant circles where they are sometimes found, as the firm advocates of revivals of religion if they were attacked? Are there not many that would concede all that the

sceptical or the scoffing opponent would desire to have conceded? Now it is much, it is every thing, when christians intelligently, and on settled grounds, believe in the value and existence of revivals of religion; when they have so examined the subject, so read the New Testament, and so made it a matter of prayer, as to see that, in the estimation of the Redeemer, the descent of the Holy Ghost on the world, in powerful revivals of religion, was to be the triumph of his work, and a blessing worth the self-denials and toils of this life, and his unspeakable agonies on the cross. Such a feeling in the churches is usually a precurser of such a work of grace; and we cannot hope for such descending influences on our cities until christians shall think as the Saviour thought, and feel as the Saviour felt. This is the great thing now needed among christians; and that day which shall convince all, or the great body of professing christians in cities, of the reality and desirableness of revivals of religion, will constitute a new era in the history of religion, and will precede the manifestations of the power of God like that on the day of Pentecost.

2. For the promotion of religion in places like this, christians should be firm and settled in the principles of religion. There should be no yielding of principle, no improper compliance with the customs around us. Our views of religion should be drawn from the Bible, and not from the books which uninspired men have written, or from the views which the gay and fashionable, the rich and vain, and even the literary and scientific world may entertain of religion and its duties. Literature and science, poetry and the arts, are to be allowed no more to give us our views of religion than gayety and fashion. From the Holy Bible—the unerring word of the living God—christians are to derive their views of the nature of religion. There we are to go to learn what the soul is worth; what it cost to redeem it; what is its condition as it comes into the world; what is the state of man by nature; what dangers beset him; why man is placed on the earth, and for what objects christians are to live. Fresh with the views drawn from the living fountains of truth, what estimate should we form of the multitudes around us?—what but that they are lost, ruined, dying, and that every thing should be done that can be done for their salvation? And when we have drunk deep at that living fountain, what views should we derive of the duty of christians here? That they should be every where the firm and unwavering friends of God; the advocates of truth and holiness; the rebukers of sin by their lips and by their lives; and the laborers in the vineyard of their Lord to save souls from death. On all the questions that divide the religious from the irreligious world, the christian should have settled views, and should abide by them, come contempt, or cursing, or flame. There should be no vacillating; no wavering; no taking sides with the foes of the Redeemer; no yielding a point which the Redeemer would not yield. In the great questions pertaining to

the new birth and the atonement; to revivals of religion and to missions; to temperance, chastity, and the Sabbath; to the spread of the Bible and to Sabbath-schools; in regard to the theatre, the ball-room, and the splendid gayety and folly, there *ought* to be singleness and uniformity of opinion and conduct among the friends of the Redeemer. It ought to be known where each friend of Christ could be found. There ought to be the same views and feelings which the Redeemer would have; the same course of life which he would advise and recommend. Is it so? So far from it, that you can hardly go into a promiscuous assemblage of professed christians without finding on many of the most important of these points as many different views as there are different minds; and so far from it that you cannot calculate on the efficient and harmonious co-operation of any considerable portion of such a group to put down any one of these evils. So it ought not to be; so it was not in the days of apostolic decision and independence in religion.

3. It is the duty of christians to provide means for the religious instruction of the masses of mind that are thrown together in cities, the means of bringing all under christian influence. Just now, not very far from one half of the population in all our cities would be excluded from places of worship, should they be disposed to attend, for the absolute want of room. Now it is in the *power* of the various denominations of christians in this city, and in other cities, to provide ample accommodations for all the population that could attend on public worship. It is in their power to get all the wandering and neglected children into Sabbath-schools. It is in their power to place a Bible in every family. It is in their power to keep up prayer-meetings, and other religious services, in every lane and alley where it would be desirable. It is in the power of christians, aided by what they might depend on in other classes of the community favorable to morals, to close the thousands of dram-shops and low taverns that infest us. What can be done should be done; and I am saying only that which all men will admit to be well-founded, when I say that all these things *should* be done in this city, and *when* done we might look for a general revival of religion.

4. It is the duty of christians in a city, as every where, but principally here, to bring the influence of religion to bear on the members of their families. We look abroad, but let us also look at home. If we wish a revival of religion, it must be sought in our own hearts; in our own dwellings. Whatever there is in our hearts that grieves the Holy Spirit of God should be removed, and what there is we may easily know. If we have forgotten our first love; if we have laid aside the simplicity of our confidence in the Lord Jesus; if we have neglected prayer; if our secret devotions are cold, formal, heartless, often intermitted; if we are seeking the world, its wealth, its pleasures, its honors; if we have become rich, and at the same time proud and self-confident; if avarice has grown as covetousness has been grati-

fied; and if for our families we are seeking the world rather than heaven, it is time for us to pause, and to retrace our steps, and with penitent hearts to begin life anew. These things hinder religion; these things prevent revivals. And whatever there is in our families that grieves the Spirit of God should be laid aside. The God that sees all knows what that may be. If family devotion is cold and formal, or is not maintained at all; if the love of dress, and vanity, and parties of pleasure, and the gayeties of the world have seized upon the minds of our children, and if we feel that they must be indulged; these then are things that prevent religion: these the things that shut the heavenly influences from our dwellings and from the city of our habitation.

5. There should be prayer for a revival of religion; prayer distinctly and definitely for that. O could twenty thousand christians in this city unite in that one supplication, "O LORD, REVIVE THY WORK," would not the ear of God be open to their cry? When shall this be? When shall the time come that we can feel that such a prayer ascends to God from the hearts of the thousands of his professed friends in a city like this? This, brethren, is what we need; the spirit of that ancient man that wrestled till the break of day, saying, "I cannot let thee go except thou bless me;" the spirit of that prophet of the Lord, who in the name of the church said, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Isaiah, 62 : 1.

Christians, God has placed you in this city to do good; to show the power of his Gospel; to promote religion. What are the prospects of the immortal souls around you? Where will they soon be? Soon they and you will be together at the bar of God. You will meet when the gayeties of life shall have died away; when fashion and wealth shall have lost their glitter; when the eternal doom of the soul is to be pronounced, and when *your* chief joy then will be found in the reflection that you have done as much AS POSSIBLE FOR THEIR SALVATION.

If religion is to be revived, it is to begin at the house of God. There are the hopes of man in regard to his immortal welfare. There is not a vice in this city that might not be crippled or destroyed if every christian had the burning zeal of Paul. Christians should drink anew of the fountain of the waters of life. Time was, in the days of the martyrs, when a female, trained in the refinements of the Roman capital, would not throw a grain of incense on a pagan altar to save her body from the flames. O come those times again; times when all who bear the christian name shall, with such firmness, resist all the forms of sin. Come those times when every christian, dead to the world but alive unto God, shall resist sin, if need be, "even unto blood," and when he shall labor and pray unceasingly FOR A REVIVAL OF PURE RELIGION!

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 4. Vol. XV.) APRIL, 1841. (Whole No. 172.

SERMON CCXCVII.

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THE METHODS OF THE ADVERSARY.

"*In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*" 2 Cor. 4 : 4.

There are good influences in this world, at the head of which is God. There are also bad influences, at the head of which is the devil. In preaching, we often speak of the good influences, and admonish men not to defeat them. It is equally proper that we speak of the bad influences, emanating from the wicked agent referred to, and apprise men of their reality and power, and urge them to a decisive resistance.

The wicked agent who stands at the head of the bad influences is called in the text "the god of this world." We hesitate at first in applying a phrase of so broad and exalted meaning to any other than the supreme Ruler, the rightful Lord of this and all worlds. But we find the Saviour, alluding to the same agent, saying, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." He is called "god of this world," and "prince of this world," on account of the sway which he exercises over the greater part of it, and on account of the service, the obedience, and homage which are generally paid to him rather than to Jehovah. Sometimes the agent in question is called "the adversary," as arrayed against all divine and human interests. The name "Satan," which he more commonly bears in the Bible, signifies an adversary, an enemy, an accuser. In one passage, (Rev. 20 : 2,) there are four terms by which he is designated: "dragon;" "old serpent;" "devil;" and "Satan." "He laid hold on the dragon, that old

serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years."

I go into no argument to prove the existence of such a being as is described in the language just quoted; or the fact of his agency in our world. I take the doctrine as it stands revealed on the sacred page. It is there revealed; through the whole inspired volume variously and luminously revealed; as luminously revealed as the doctrine of the divine existence and agency. The principles and style of interpretation which would blot out the doctrine of the existence of the devil, would blot out also the doctrine of the divine existence. When I open and read the holy volume I cannot be an atheist. I am compelled to believe in the existence of God, the universal Creator and moral Governor; at the same time, and with equal force, am I compelled to assent to the existence and agency in our world of Satan.

From the same book, the Bible, which teaches us the existence of this great fallen spirit, we learn also the character and style of his agency. Of these it is proposed to speak in the present discourse, namely, the character and methods of the adversary's operation. While I shall not confine myself to the one main point or power brought to view in the text, that of blinding men, it is intended to keep within the manifest teachings of the Bible respecting the agency in question. We mean to allege nothing against the wicked one, to the support of which we cannot adduce the unqualified divine warrant.

I shall lead you to consider the agency of the devil under the three following heads:

I. His INTENT TO DO EVIL.

II. His POWER TO DO EVIL.

III. His METHODS OF DOING EVIL.

I. The first point, *his intent to do evil*, we may soon dismiss. His nature is represented as essential malignancy. He is the implacable enemy of God and man. His warfare upon the human race is intense and universal, because they are the objects of redeeming regards—because God is meaning to raise up a great multitude from this fallen race to heaven; there to occupy, it may be, the very mansions out of which Satan and his hosts were thrust. We can easily conceive the bitterness of his hate against the whole scheme of redemption, especially against its Author and all those who are in the process of being redeemed. His one rabid purpose, according to the Bible, is to defeat, as far as he can, the scheme of redemption, and secure as many as he can from earth for his own dominion of sin and death. Hence the names he has, of "murderer from the beginning," "destroyer," "angel of the bottomless pit." Hence his one great business of going about seeking whom he may devour. Our second point is,

II. *The power of Satan to do mischief and destroy.* His power unquestionably is very great, both from his own personal capabilities, and from the immense number of evil spirits subordinate to him as their leader. We are taught to conceive of Satan as the head of a spiritual empire of great extent, and comprehending within itself innumerable subordinate agents. These were originally holy intelligences: they swerved from their allegiance to the "blessed and only Potentate," on which account they lost their first estate. Satan, as pre-eminent in rank and in dignity, took the lead in the revolt, and on account of this pre-eminence, continues to rule the rest, who are styled his angels. What their number may be it is vain to conjecture; but when we reflect on the magnitude of the universe, and the extensive and complicated agency in which they are affirmed to be engaged, we shall probably be inclined to conjecture that their number far exceeds that of the human race.

In this view we easily account for the extent of his agency in tempting and destroying the human race. In the Bible there seems to be ascribed to him a sort of ubiquity, as though he were present in different parts of the world at the same time. We are not to understand that he himself is thus present. None but the divine Being has this power. The representation is based upon the fact that he has such immense numbers under him, executing his great schemes of wickedness; and all their subordinate works are ascribed to the will and efficiency of the one controlling agent—the devil.

The power of Satan, as at the head of so vast an empire of wicked spirits, all ready to execute his crafty plans and malignant dictations, must be fearfully great.

His own pre-eminence, his towering capabilities, which render him adequate to such a control, must be astonishing and complete. How comprehensive and mighty the intellect of Satan! There is ground to suppose that, of created minds previous to the revolt in heaven, his was the most commanding; the greatest. This spirit, the highest of all the hosts of heaven, stood next to the uncreated mind; and from this very pre-eminence sprang the daring purpose of revolt, and the rearing of another standard in heaven. To this original and astonishing greatness of endowment, there is to be added on the growth of many thousand years. This growth, considering how that mind has been tasked in its mighty schemes and conflicts, we must suppose has been prodigious. I might go on and refer to the works of Satan as proof of the wonderful strength and scope of his intellect, but enough has been said to satisfy every believer in revelation that the power of that being who is warring, on the theatre of this world, with the Son of God, his power to do evil, from his own intellectual endowments and attainments, and from the empire of wicked spirits which he governs, is vastly, fearfully great.

III. We are now prepared to enter upon our third point, namely, *his modes of doing evil*, of *bringing destruction upon men*: "The methods of the devil." This is a literal translation of one Scripture phrase "μεθοδίας" in the Greek—"the methods of the devil." Here we are opened into a great field. We cannot go into a minute description and detail. The time will allow us merely to indicate some of the general schemes and manœuvres resorted to by the adversary for the corrupting and destroying of men.

The great object of the adversary manifestly is to prevent the effect of the Gospel upon the minds of men. Truth is Christ's grand instrument in all his works of reformation and redemption. The devil keeps it off, and keeps it out as far as he can. The text so informs us. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost, (that is, lost in sin,) in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." And why blinded? Lest the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. What the precise nature of this blinding is, and what the way in which it is effected, we are not informed by the inspired writer; nor is there time to go into any inquiries at this point. The *fact*, (and with this we are chiefly concerned,) the fact that the adversary does blind the minds of men, is unequivocally asserted; and the *effect* is asserted with equal clearness. A man, or body of men, so blinded, do not see or apprehend the evidence, the reality, the force of truth.

The first step being to get and keep the minds of men dispossessed of truth, a kindred and auxiliary measure is to keep those minds possessed of error. Error is the grand instrument of all the devil's achievements, as truth is of Christ's: and his character and name are in perfect keeping with this instrument. "For," says Christ, "he is a liar and the father of it." In the revelation it is said, "he deceiveth the whole world." We have seen that he is god of this world, that he blinds men. His blinding then is on a large scale, by getting in false religions and systems of error. It is in this way, rather than by direct instigation, that he is represented as working in the children of disobedience. Here we see the strength and craft of that mighty intellect. By these comprehensive manœuvres; by extending and establishing false religions; by getting accepted great swaying superstitions in some sections; in others, the polluting and destroying doctrines and rites of paganism, he is enabled, safely to his interest, to withdraw his solicitude from a very large majority of the human family. In those parts he knows that, without any special efforts or care, all will be allegiant to him while those great schemes of falsehood remain.

The next manœuvre or method is, where there must be christianity in some form, to get in, if possible, a corrupt form. He does introduce some great religious error: it goes for christianity —goes for religion; though there be not a particle of the spirit

and power of religion in it. These corrupt forms are various, to suit different orders of mind, tastes, and degrees of cultivation. These fundamental errors are embraced; and just so far as the adversary can blind men, and induce them to believe these errors, all is deemed safe; he has no concern about those individuals so long as the errors are adhered to.

Here let me add, it has been well remarked that religious error is at issue with religious truth at this point, namely, of the punishment of wicked, unregenerate men in the future world. God has declared, and placed it on record, "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" "Except ye repent ye shall surely perish." The great adversary early began to say, and has been busily saying all along down the line of time, "Ye shall not surely die." Here we have the great, standing, stereotyped lie of the father of lies. Upon this one text, which he took in the garden of Eden, he has been discoursing ever since, and with it filling up his fiery dominions with spirits from earth. "Be prayerless men; be dishonest men; be profane men; Sabbath-breakers, thieves, liars, adulterers—continue such, go out of the world such, ye shall not die; surely ye shall not be very gravely punished; it shall be well with you in the end." How comforting, but O how destroying!

For the sake of clearness of view and impression, let us come down to an individual case. The devil, as a skilful, practiced seducer, aims in the first place at the destruction of principle, right religious principle: if possible, to get truth out of the mind, and error in its place. If, by his deceptive, blinding power, he can only induce a person to deny the existence of God, or the inspiration and truth of the Bible, or the doctrine of atonement, or regeneration, or of the future endless punishment of the wicked, and keep to that denial, he is satisfied. He knows that the irreligion, the impenitence, and the eternal ruin of that person comes along as a matter of course.

But in regions where Gospel truth is proclaimed, it cannot be kept out of the minds of many by all the diligence and blinding power of the devil and his angels. Blessed be God, the great Promulgator and Patron of this truth is stronger than the patron of error. This Gospel truth, where faithfully proclaimed, does enter the minds of some; sharper than any two-edged sword, and an almighty power backing it, it cuts its way through the steel and the adamant. To change the figure, the incorruptible seed enters, is lodged in the soul, and begins slightly to work. The sinner begins to feel, to be alarmed, to be moved.

At this juncture, the effort of the devil is to catch it away. We have this, most explicitly, on the authority of Christ. Said he, not in figure, but in the literal explaining of figure, "Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." In addition to the authority of Christ, we

have the evidence of our observation. We see this thing done: we see men seriously impressed; they are under the incipient workings of truth; when we are grieved and astonished to learn that it is all gone. They see something, or hear something, or think something, and their impressions go away with the suddenness almost of lightning. It is the devil snatching away the word; and, beyond question, he is wonderfully busy in this way in seasons of religious revival. But he cannot always succeed in getting away the word. In the breasts of many it is inserted too deep; it adheres.

Where this is the case, his next effort is to induce delusion. While the truth works, he manœuvres to conduct the process so that it shall terminate in a false hope. Here he comes forth in a new garb; even as an angel of light. By this we are to understand that he put on the appearance of goodness; he is even religious; and helps others, if not in *becoming* so, at least in *appearing* so. The part of the mind he operates on is the imagination; presents forms and visions which excite and exhilarate; injects passages of Scripture such as "thy sins be forgiven thee," with the interpretation that they came right down from God, and are God's words to the burdened soul. The burdened soul believes it and leaps forth with an assurance of forgiveness. The hope in these cases is built not upon the fact of gracious exercises in view of divine truth, but upon the fact that some remarkable vision or dream, or some passage of Scripture came suddenly and unsought to the mind. The adversary, doubtless, has many methods of bringing about a false hope; and a great point is gained when he has done it; indeed, two or three points. He has succeeded in keeping another soul from Christ, when convinced of his need of Christ, and was even feeling his way after him. By the delusion, the spurious experience, he has made the final destruction of that soul altogether more probable. Finally, he is enabled to show that his schemes of error will bring about conversions, and religious experience, about as well as what is called the truth. Thus he brings forward his own works, almost his own miracles sometimes, in order to give currency and permanence to his errors.

I should like to pause and speak in this connection of the wonderful versatility of the devil. We do not comprehend, certainly we do not properly consider, the great variety of things he can do, or help men to do; and we ought to understand that he is just as ready to do religious things as wicked things, if he can as effectually accomplish his malignant purposes thereby. His borrowed form is manifestly his favorite one, and the most to be feared. I do believe he inflicts far deeper injuries upon the souls of men as an angel of light, than as an angel of darkness; destroys more effectually, and more to his mind, as the fair-mouthed and still seducer, than as the open-mouthed and roaring lion.

But Satan cannot defeat all truth by catching it away, or by bringing it to a delusive result. The divine power makes it end in the thorough conversion of many souls. They come forth into the light; they stand firm upon the rock.

This brings us to another stage and field of the great adversary's operations. His strongest and most definite efforts are made upon those who stand forth as professed christians; even upon those whom he knows Christ stands pledged to protect. In this view we behold the astonishing audacity of the devil. We may be astonished at it when we remember how he assailed in three artful modes, and tried to throw down the Son of God himself. What disciple may hope to escape, when the Lord himself was the object of his wiles? It is very evident from the Bible, that the specific, individual, and very concentrated assaults of the adversary are made upon those who are known to the world as christians. Against these are employed his most ingenious devices. For these he spreads his most artful snares; into these are cast his "fiery darts;" by which we may understand the injecting of wicked blasphemous thoughts, the inflaming of the imagination, the enkindling of the unholy passions, and making them burn as if set on fire of hell. He peeled and desolated Job, in order to compel him to curse his Maker. He incited David to number Israel, a crime which brought down the desolating sword of God. He desired to have Peter, that he might sift him as wheat; and but for the prayer of Christ, he would have had him, and would have done it. He entered into Judas, one of the chosen twelve, and, through the passion of avarice, persuaded him to sell Christ to his enemies. He put it into the heart of Ananias and Sapphira, disciples who probably had thus far run well, to lie to the Holy Ghost. These are specimens of the direct and fiery assaults of Satan upon the professed friends of Christ. The object is the overthrow of Christians, to make them sin and fall; in order, first, that he may disgrace them individually, and, if possible, pluck them out of the hands of Christ, and destroy their souls. What a triumph, if he can only get one of Christ's little ones under his foul cloven feet! The second and greater object is, that he may disgrace the cause of Christ; that he may bring discredit upon the truth of Christ. His name means calumniator. He is called in the Revelation, "the accuser of the brethren." The sinning of his own subjects is done very much out of sight. The deeds of wicked men are deeds of darkness. He is willing that they should remain deeds of darkness. Not so when the christian sins. The adversary, in the first instance, unquestionably often instigates the crime; and then he manages to have it brought and held up in mid heaven for all men to look at. It is the sin of a christian. "Don't you see," he says, "that this spiritual, praying religion makes people no better? They are all hypocrites, or nearly all. The soundest mo-

rality, the real practical goodness, after all, is with those who make no pretensions to this sort of experience." One or two such arguments in the hands of this arch deceiver are enough to satisfy multitudes in every community that spiritual religion is all a pretence; that men are just as good, and just as safe, without being born again, as with it. They lie down and sleep on the easy pillow of this delusion; it is so easy, and so many new opiates are administered, that they sleep quietly, brutishly, almost, up to the hour of their sleeping in death, and their waking in eternity, as deluded, unregenerate men, there to lie down under the dreadful wrath of God.

Such are some of the methods of the devil. The object in all seems to be, to stand between redeeming truth and a world of lost minds; and by blinding the latter, and obscuring the former, prevent, as far as possible, all salutary results. The subject we have been discussing suggests various topics of remark, on some of which we will dwell for a few moments. Though a dark subject, it sheds light on some points which otherwise seem nearly inexplicable.

1. In the first place, it furnishes an explanation of the fact, that men, capable of reasoning, often reason so strangely, and come to such unaccountable conclusions in matters of christian faith and practice. The fact of such reasoning is frequent and notorious. We do observe that clear-headed men, whose minds on all other subjects move straight and sure as a demonstration in geometry, when they come upon some great truth of God, involving unbounded interests, even their own interminable destiny, exhibit altogether another order and style of intellectual movement. They are not able to see the strongest points that ever stood forth in effulgent light for the mind's apprehension. They cannot walk without staggering and stumbling in the high, broad, illumined path which the Holy Ghost has marked out for our certain arrival at truth. How comes it to pass? Clear-headed, strait-minded every where else but within the precincts of religion: how is it that they move so here? I confess I am utterly confounded on this point, till I read in the Bible that the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not. This is the explanation which God gives of this matter, and as we can get no other in any quarter, may we not be permitted to rest in this? This does account for the anomally. It is owing to a blindness preternaturally induced upon the mind, keeping out the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ.

Take, for instance, the doctrine of a retribution to come, already referred to. God declares that there is a hell, and that it is the place where fallen angels and incorrigible men are to be for ever punished. In the clear and strong assertion of this truth, God has put human language to its utmost limit and energy of expression. If there has been any failure to express it, it is a failure in the

power of language, not in the purpose of the speaker, Language as employed in the Bible, we repeat, has again and again done its utmost on this subject. In addition, wicked beings, the devil and his angels have been permitted to come up, as it were, sweltering from those fires in demonstration of the fact, that there is a place of torment, and that God is punishing and will for ever punish there his rebellious subjects. After all, multitudes will have it that there is no such place, no such thing. In accounting now for this very prevalent unbelief, on a point on which testimony is so perfect, and evidence is so made to flame and to blaze, we are forced to admit the fact of a positive and thick blindness upon the minds of these men.

It is not only a blindness, there seems in connection a contracting and depressing of the mind. There are men, we find, who can take large views on other subjects—can discourse admirably on human law and government: "There must be authority here, penalty here; both inflexibly maintained: no government, no order, no security without it." Very well: but these same persons of great and comprehensive minds, civilians, magistrates, who have just been reasoning so admirably on human law and government, the moment they touch on matters connected with the divine government, the whole scene is changed—the entire style of argument changed—"Authority is nothing—penalty, no need of it:" a wavering, womanish weakness is made to pervade the whole divine administration: an administration conducted throughout on the most imbecile principles; principles so imbecile, that it would be impossible in the strength of them to govern successfully and progressively a community of half a dozen children. And yet these comprehensive minds seem to suppose that the great Monarch of the universe can, on these same principles, govern the literal immensity of his dominions. What does it mean? What means this childish, this puling logic, in connection with such minds? Only one thing solves the mystery: the blinding, narrowing, depressing influence of the god of this world. And so he maintains his bad pre-eminence of god of this world, and destroyer of this world.

2. My second remark is to suggest a reason why the devil disseminates so widely disbelief in his own existence and agency. It is remarkable to what an extent, even amongst those who receive the Bible, there is this disbelief. God's revelation is as clear on this subject as on any other. The doctrine of satanic existence and agency is asserted in every variety of name and form. It is a tissue running most intimately clean through the Bible. According to the divine teaching, it is a terrible power and agency, and yet multitudes who profess to believe the Bible, believe nothing about it. Others, who pretend to believe it, do not more than half believe it. With the majority, the whole tremendous subject, on which God in his word is so serious, is matter of jest and sport; something to be witty upon and laugh about. How can we account for these

things? In this way:—it is one of the devices of the adversary; what he himself brings about; what he knows to be necessary to his most successful operations. He operates, we have seen, very much by stratagem. We read of the "wiles of the devil"—of "the depths," that is, the hidden plans of Satan. We read repeatedly of "the snares of the devil." As a great fowler, spreading his net for the entrapping of souls, he knows, and so may we, that his success depends upon his keeping out of sight. The Bible says truly, "In vain is the net set in sight of any bird." The fowler conceals his person: on the same principle, the devil conceals his. While men are not aware of his presence, while they are stoutly denying his existence, he is seizing upon them. While they are jeering at his name, and making themselves merry at his doings, he grapples them, and ere they are aware, brings them to that world where the laughers now, will weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth for ever.

3. It is obvious from our subject and the whole teaching of the Bible, that the christian has a great labor and duty to perform in order to stand. It is to the highest degree important that he do stand, both for his own sake and for the sake of Christ's cause and truth. But how shall he stand with such powers against him? He wrestles not with flesh and blood, (not with merely human enemies,) but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. They are evil angels; spiritual foes; the legions of darkness that are against him. They are malignantly determined in their onset. They mean, if possible, to overthrow him: they work by wile and craft: they mean to do it, ere he is aware of danger. What can the christian do? The apostle instructs him what to do. Let him take unto himself the whole armor of God, that he may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, disciple of the Lord, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel. Above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the adversary, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. This last, Christ wielded to the utter discomfiture of the tempter. In each instance, the appeal, "it is written" silenced and confounded him, and in the end drove him away.

Let it be remembered, that this whole armor is to be worn, and employed with prayer, the mightiest consideration of all. Whoever does this, praying as he contends, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto, will be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Especially if he keep fast to Christ; *upon* Christ as his foundation; *under* Christ as his protector, he is perfectly safe from all this hostile array. Were it tenfold greater, he need not be disturbed. It would still be true, that more are they that be for him, than they that be against him. We are sometimes

astonished at the ease with which, according to the Bible, the christian may turn back this terrible foe of his salvation. It is only, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." The efficacy is all in Christ: the power is there before which the foe quails and recedes. One with that Saviour, faithful in the adherence, you shall abide in safety; you shall prevail over the arrogant and plotting enemy. Standing in Christ, you may strike a blow with your frail arm of dust, which shall stun and prostrate the arch-fiend. But never forget, a single moment, that your entire safety and final triumph depend upon your abiding in Christ.

4. In view of the number and strength of the christian's foes, it is no great marvel that he is sometimes overtaken and overthrown. The adversary has only to take him when off his guard; when he has laid aside his armor, or when separate from his Lord, and he makes him comparatively an easy prey. This leads us to remark, in the fifth place,

5. That the fact that some who are not christians stand, while some by their side, who are known as christians, fall, is no ground of special self-complacency on the part of the former. There are some in almost every religious community who are not religious men, who are exceedingly amiable in their spirit, and correct in their way of life. They appear even better outwardly, more sober and consistent than some professors of religion, and who it is hoped are christians, though with many infirmities. These persons mean by their correct demeanor, nothing further than to live as upright men and good citizens. But the adversary, we may safely presume, has another design to accomplish by them: the same design, indeed, that he has in the fall of the professed christian, namely, to help on his great business of blinding; to give augmented strength and vividness to the impression that men can live correctly enough without religion; that they do, on the whole, live as well without as with it. The case standing thus, we ask, what possible inducement can the adversary have to assault this fair man of the world? What is to be gained? Possession? He has that already. The fall of the individual? In that there would be loss rather than gain. He knows better than to make an assault there. He makes it rather where he has lost possession, and where much is to be gained to his cause by an overthrow. Hence it is that the one is borne down upon by the prince of the power of the air with the view to crush him; the other is even upheld externally by the same power. The one is shot into with deadly and fiery weapons; the other is unmolested by any such missiles. The adversary is interested in the overthrow of the one, that he may bring a soul into jeopardy and Christ's truth into disrepute: he is interested in the upright standing of the other, that he may make it appear that men can live even better without religion than with it. Certainly, in this view, the worldly man has nothing to boast of. He stands externally, because the devil is willing he should, even desirous that he should.

There never was a greater mistake than in supposing that the adversary is interested in having his servants act with outward and abominable viciousness. There is no such thing: his devices are not so gross as that would imply. He cares not how correct and even grave the manners of unregenerate men;—the graver the better, if the heart only remains unsubdued, still linked to his interest and kingdom. He cares not, we believe, how morally, how soberly and even religiously men go in the path to death, if they will only consent to go in that path. He will be satisfied with any order of belief or disbelief, any style of conduct, any subordinate arrangement which will allow to him his usurped supremacy of god of this world.

6. Allow me, before closing, to dwell a moment on the dark picture before us, for the purpose of christian incitement. It is indeed a dark picture, and has been for successive centuries. Contemplate it. A world of minds, each of uncounted value, under the merciless and deadly despotism of the adversary of God and man; a world, too, that has been marked with the feet and wet with the tears and the blood of the Son of God. It is Christ's by creation and preservation; Christ's, too, by the purchase of his own mysterious agony; and still the adversary holds under his foul sway far the greater portion of it. We know, indeed, it is by sufferance on the part of Christ, and that good will be brought out of this evil. We know also the ascendancy is kept by craft and deception on the part of the adversary. He manages to corrupt and obscure Christ's truth—to defeat, in a measure, its operation; even to blot it out and bury it up. He gives currency and efficacy to all kinds of monstrous superstition and falsehood; spreads, like huge and black palls, his blinding and damning systems over nations and continents. Let the christian look at these facts; almost an entire world lying in the wicked one; the devil with his thousands where Christ has his tens; and the vile way this vile ascendancy is maintained; and it seems to me, the view cannot fail to move his spirit, and give new intensity to his prayer, that God would come down and relieve an oppressed world, and give the kingdom to Him whose right it is to reign, and in whose sceptre there is life and peace. The deep wrong, the utter outrage of the case as it now stands, is enough to awaken to indignation all holy feelings, and nerve to extremest exertion all sanctified energies, that truth may be more rapidly diffused, and more quickly do its work, and the darkness recede, and sin be done away, and the miserable captives of Satan become the freemen of the Lord. Can the christian be satisfied, can he remain supine, when he beholds an overwhelming proportion of the race for whom the Redeemer died against the Redeemer—on the side of, and doing service to the destroyer? No: not if there abide within him a single particle of the vivid, working aggressive spirit of a christian.

But it is not all gloom. There is hope to incite. We know the

scene is to be changed. Complete redemption is decreed. The promise has been uttered—the power pledged. Christ is the wielder of that power. He has appeared for this one simple purpose—to destroy the works of the devil. He has begun to destroy these works: he will complete what he has begun. And how will his glory shine forth in the final achievement of this destruction and of a world's deliverance. The christian then labors in hope. Let hope warm his heart and wake up his energies, and let him do something worthily in this advancing enterprise of mercy. If he takes but one soul off from the empire of darkness, and sets it over to the empire of light and love, he does a noble work. He may do more—may win many, if he will, from rebellion to allegiance, and so may every disciple of the Lord. Then would Christ's kingdom rapidly spread; he would ere long come into possession of the world he made, and peace would pervade all its borders, and the voice of gladness and thanksgiving be heard in all its dwellings.

In conclusion, we request all unconverted persons to consider the nature of their position. Let it be remembered that there are but two standards in this world—but two great moral sides; that of Christ and that of the devil. On one side or the other all mankind are arranged, either with Christ or with Satan. It is an appalling consignment I know, which thus sets all men who are not at heart living christians, over on the side of the adversary. The Bible does it: we must do it, or go against the plainest teachings of this book. According to the voice that speaks here, no matter what the standing of unregenerate men, what their outward character and appearance, they are the subjects of the wicked and malignant one; they are doing his work; they are preparing to share his prison and torments. We ask the sinner, if he is contented with this relation. Is it a worthy position for an intelligent creature of God? Is it a fitting service for those noble powers? The devil's drudgery, is it not rather infinitely dishonorable and degrading? And the end, the award, who can look at it? The unquenchable fire, the horrid companionship. Who can meet and bear such a doom? Consider these things, and look away from all this infamy and wo, to that other side of truth and love which still invites your allegiance. Yield, this hour, to that attracting goodness; submit to that rightful authority; become a member of that kingdom which is destined in its consummation to fill the earth and the universe with glory and praise.

SERMON CCXCVIII.

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THE CAUSES OF SUPERFICIAL AND TRANSIENT RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

"*They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*"—Luke, 8 : 13.

The parable, from the exposition of which this passage is quoted, is designed to illustrate the various reception and effects of the preached word among men. This is set forth in a description of the various sorts of hearers and hearing with which it would meet. For the more vivid illustration of tbe subject, he compares the word preached to seed; and the different classes of hearers are represented by the different kinds of soil in which it lodges. Some of this seed, our Saviour teaches, fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away, because it lacked moisture. In the text, he expounds this passage so that none may mistake his meaning. They who are on a rock are they, who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. The passage then teaches,

I. THAT THERE IS A CLASS OF HEARERS, WHO, FOR A SEASON, ARE GREATLY CHARMED WITH THE THINGS OF RELIGION, WHILE THEY HAVE NO ABIDING ROOT OF FAITH, OR TRUE RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE IN THEIR SOULS.

II. THAT SUCH RELIGIONISTS OFTEN EVINCE THEIR UNSOUNDNESS, BY SWERVING FROM CHRISTIAN PURITY AND FIDELITY, OR BY UTTER APOSTACY, WHEN URGED BY SEVERE TEMPTATIONS.

These propositions scarcely need confirmation. For, were they not affirmed in the unerring oracles of God, they would be manifest beyond all dispute to any intelligent observer. The

history of preaching, from the days of Christ until now, is a living exemplification, an eternal monument of their truth. There ever have been, and are, those in greater or less numbers, who hear the word anon with joy; who perhaps for the time soar above all others in the impassioned zeal and high-toned professions with which they appear to embrace religion; whose ardor not only faints, but expires, as soon as it ceases to be fanned by the breath of extraneous excitement which first gave it being; or, at all events, as soon as they are brought into a position in which religion involves any self-denial. As our Saviour elsewhere expresses it, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by-and-by he is offended. This declension of multitudes, who did run well for a time, into listless indifference, or utter apostacy, has occurred with greater or less frequency in all ages, thus wounding the hearts of the pious, and the cause of Christ in the house of his friends. This being so, it behoves us to consider this phenomenon in its causes, and, if possible, seek some remedy or alleviation.

It is necessary, however, to guard against the inference which inconsiderate minds may be in danger of deriving from this passage, viz. that it militates against the doctrine of the saint's perseverance, inasmuch as it may be supposed to imply the loss of a faith and love which once existed, and a consequent falling from grace. But, let it be remembered that these persons withered away because they had no root in them; for it fell on a rock, and therefore could not root itself down into the depths of the soul. From which it appears that the heart in which this rapid and short-lived growth of seeming piety had appeared, had ever been a heart of stone, unchanged to an heart of flesh: also, that however such converts may have had appearances of faith and love in their own view, and the view of others, yet they had no living and abiding root or principle thereof in their souls. The text, therefore, instead of teaching their fall from grace, teaches by implication the direct contrary; for it teaches that the cause of their lapse is, that they never had the true root of grace in their souls, but only a plausible show of it; thus manifestly implying that a principle of true grace would have prevented such a catastrophe; that as it is a dog, and not a lamb

that returns to his vomit, so it is the sinner still unrenewed, and not the saint that returns with a sharpened appetite to his lusts.

With these preliminary explanations I will now proceed to inquire into some of the causes which contribute to make and multiply stony-ground hearers, instead of those good and honest hearts which hear the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

1. The depravity of the human heart is unquestionably the first and pregnant source of this superficial and illusive hearing of the word. This too arms all other influences with their power. The Bible attaches to the heart but two attributes, viz. that it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. These two properties are causes adequate to the production of all the results in question. For that the heart in this case retains its wickedness unslain, is supposed. For the dominion of sin, and lack of renewing grace, is the reason given for their apostacy. Sin seeks to cherish, strengthen, and perpetuate its own existence. It strives to fortify itself by every device. If then the sinner who believes it will procure eternal torments for him, unless he repents and believes, can be persuaded that he does indeed exercise love towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; while sin and lust are still unmortified, and reigning in his soul—however their outbreakings may be temporarily checked—this pacifies his conscience, and smothers all alarms, while it spares his sin, and extinguishes all desires and endeavors to eradicate it. We see, then, in the wicked heart ample disposition, stimulated by the most stirring motives and impulses to hear the Gospel superficially, and lay the flattering unction to the soul that it has complied with the Gospel, while it has never laid down the weapons of its rebellion against God. If the disposition arises from the desperate wickedness, the means of indulging it are found in the deceitfulness of the heart.

It is capable of assuming such specious disguises, that the prophet well inquires, Who can know it? Who can understand his errors? says the Psalmist. As it is an ingredient of the heart's wickedness that it masks and conceals itself, so it has ensnared multitudes of dying immortals to think they are something when they are nothing. While the heart cherishes sin as a sweet morsel, why should it not task all its craft, all its powers of self-

flattery, in devices to persuade itself of peace and safety, although treading on the extreme verge of the pit? Surely it is far more agreeable and soothing to believe that our affections, principles, and actions are conformed to the will and word of God; and, in the strength of that conviction, to be fascinated with hearing the word, than to hear it thrusting its reproofs and warnings as arrows and goads into the soul, and serving no other purpose than to torment it with a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. But while this is the original and efficient cause of all superficial and spurious religious experience, there are various instrumental causes which greatly augment and aggravate its influences; some of which will now be specified. And,

2. A want of a thorough religious education often contributes to this superficial and transient kind of religious experience. While the Spirit of God is the efficient author of regeneration, yet he operates by the instrumentality of the Word. For of his own will begat he us by the word of truth. The fruit of his saving work in the soul is, that he produces a harmony between our hearts and the announcements of his word. The consequence is, that in proportion as the doctrines and precepts of the Bible are well understood and impressed upon the mind, the prospect increases that its religious experience, if any it has, will be pure, deep, and abiding; and not only so, but the subject of them being versed in the unerring and eternal standard of true piety—the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel—is enabled in some degree to compare his own state, feelings, and exercises with this only standard; and thus detect any unsound leaven, and learn whether his joy in hearing the word is genuine or counterfeit. Now mankind are by nature so depraved, sluggish, and stupid in divine things, that they rarely have any true and well-defined ideas of evangelical religion, except as it is impressed upon them by varied, reiterated, and never-ceasing instruction. And when it is thus iterated line upon line, and precept upon precept, it is surprising what indefinite and erroneous notions of religion often lurk in the mind. The most clear and impressive preachers are often painfully disappointed to witness what ignorance and misapprehension many who have heard them all their days betray on those fundamental points which

they have labored with the greatest care and frequency. The most distinct and abiding conceptions of religion which are obtained without the teaching of the Holy Ghost, are obtained in the nursery, before the family altar, under the ministry of pious parents; instilling with untiring assiduity the great truths of the Gospel into the minds of their offspring, while yet tender and susceptible; bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and ever fortifying precept by example. They who have enjoyed, in addition to formal instruction, the example of pious parents carrying the principles of religion in all their power and beauty into acts, and shedding its benign influence over every action and attitude of existence, every sphere of life and love; they on whom this example has shone from earliest infancy, so that it is interwoven with the first and most imperishable associations and teachings of lisping childhood—these have a solid conception, a living image of the nature of religion ever present to their minds, such as men, books, and preaching of themselves never can convey.

"But in thy life thy law appears,
"Drawn out in living characters."

Universal experience proves that an individual, or community, well-educated and indoctrinated in religion, is far more likely than an ignorant one, not only to make solid and durable advances in piety when wrought upon by a religious awakening, but also to discriminate true religion from false, and guard against those counterfeit hopes which end in the confirmed apathy or apostacy of their subject, and the dishonor of religion.

3. The same result is promoted by superficial and delusive instructions to those who are awakened and solicitous for their souls. In this matter we may say with pre-eminent justice, like priest, like people. Whoever, in Divine Providence, is called to the work of counselling and guiding inquiring souls in the way of life, is burdened with the most awful responsibility ever laid upon a worm of the dust. And here the temptation is most urgent to keep back what is most profitable to the soul to know, and shun to declare the whole counsel of God. The benevolence of the pious heart prompts it to hope and desire that as many as possible may be plucked as brands from the

burning; and the desire grows intense, in proportion to the natural ties and endearments subsisting in the case. How natural, then, to seek the gratification of such desires, by taking any plausible measures to induce them to hope, and be pleased with the things of religion, and thus assure their own hearts and ours that they have indeed passed from death unto life? How natural to array religion in meretricious attractions, for a carnal and selfish spirit; instead of showing its divine beauties, that they may know whether they love or hate them, and holding out in bold relief those scriptural tests, which show what manner of spirit we are of, and try the spirits, whether they be of God! How strongly will they incline to construe any change from distress to joy as a true conversion, and to estimate its genuineness rather by the degree of ecstasy produced, than by its conformity to the word of God! How many motives will urge him to keep out of view the self-denial, humiliation, cross-bearing, separateness from the world—the free and complete dedication to the will, command, service, and glory of God, which enter into the very nature and being of Gospel piety? May not the temptation be powerful to touch gently upon the indispensable necessity of a new birth by the Spirit of God, which shall not merely amend, correct, or develope old principles, but shall implant new ones—laying the axe at the root of the tree, and making him a new creature in Christ Jesus? May there not be a reluctance to expose the corruptions of the heart, the guilt and wickedness of innate moral affections, and the indispensable necessity of subjugating and mortifying them? May there not be a faintness in preaching the law, so as to convince the sinner of his guilt, condemnation, and helplessness, —slay his selfish hopes, demolish all excuses, evince his dependence on the unmerited and sovereign grace of God, and test his hope by showing in uncompromising terms the nature of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord? May there not be a neglect to show the insufficiency of all affections which spring from no higher source than self-love, and do not fix on the intrinsic excellence and beauty of divine things? But why pursue such questions any further? Who does not see that nothing short of the most imperious convictions of duty to God and Christ, and perishing souls, can with-

stand the temptations to touch these subjects lightly, and refrain from marring the peace of any who are confident they are in the kingdom, while they are yet aliens and strangers to it? And what is this but to infuse peace by administering an opiate, instead of the medicines which, though painful to the carnal mind, alone can cure the disease! Alas for those who daub with intemperate mortar, and heal slightly the hurt of the soul, crying peace, peace, when there is no peace. Too often, indeed, the great Physician is summoned before the sword of the Spirit has made any wound, or discovered any hurt to be cured. Conviction of sin is discarded as needless or unimportant; and the remedy is as light as the disease. For how shall they repent who are unconvinced of any sin to be repented of? Clearly delusive as are such views, the purest and soundest ministers and christians are tempted in some measure to defer to them, unless they exercise the utmost care to keep the fear of God and the good of souls ever before their eyes. Unless they take heed to themselves, and the doctrine that in so doing they may save their own souls, and the souls of those that hear them, they will almost inevitably yield to that demand of the unsanctified heart to speak smooth things, and prophecy deceits. And what less can be expected than that the seed should fall on stony ground, and barely reach the surface of the soul, when the sower does not even seek to dislodge the heart of stone beneath? How can the seed root itself downward, when not even the fallow ground is broken by the ploughshare of Divine truth to give it entrance?

4. All extraneous influences other than Divine truth, presented to the mind, and applied by the Spirit, which are the cause of an interest in religion, tend, unless guarded against, to render that interest spurious. I refer now to sympathy, animal excitement, admiration of the eloquence and tact of the preacher, rather than the truths he enforces—addressing to sinners any considerations but those of a moral nature and bearing upon the soul, God, and eternity;—moving him by any force or influence but the truths of the Bible. For to these we must be conformed, if converted at all. And conversion, in view of any thing else, is not turning to God. All other influences are worse than vain, except as they serve to bring the mind in nearer contact, and

under the fuller power and effulgence of Gospel truth. But when they intercept the soul's view of truth, they are fraught with danger; and it is ever our duty to frustrate any such tendency with the most vigilant precautions. It is not in the fire, tempest, and whirlwind of human commotion, or human machinery, that the Spirit speaks in his errand of Divine benignity, but in the still small voice, summoning the soul to obey the message of his word.

But, without expatiating further on this branch of the subject, I dismiss it by observing that we see abundant agencies which the great adversary of souls can employ to multiply converts of that superficial stamp, that will never endure a trial of their faith by temptation, because they have never endured the searching trials of God's word.

The grand defect in their experience, as the event ever proves, is, that their affections had no higher origin than selfishness. Their delight in religion arose simply from the imagination that they should be saved, instead of their hoping that they were in Christ, and heirs of his salvation; because they delighted in divine things on account of their intrinsic excellence and loveliness. Hence, because they had no pleasure in holiness and holy objects on their own account, their attachment ceases as soon as it costs any self-denial to adhere to them, and their selfishness can find some more inviting channel of gratification. Because they have no root in them in time of temptation, they fall away. When tribulation or persecution ariseth they are offended, because of the word.

INFERENCES.

1. The subject teaches us that mere joy and delight on the subject of religion is no sufficient proof of a genuine conversion. The same principle which moves devils to tremble in view of their doom, would fill them with ecstasies if assured that they would be shielded from that destiny. Indeed, spurious conversions are perhaps most likely of all to incite frantic and boisterous rejoicings. So it is made the distinguishing characteristic of these stony-ground hearers, that with joy they heard the word. Indeed, the joy of a selfish and unhumbled spirit will naturally be more tumultuous and forward than that which is ravished with the infinite majesty, purity, justice,

and grace of God. The latter is humble, placid, deep, and tranquil; and though often clouded and trembling, is still unspeakable and full of glory. And hence the religious meetings of those whose whole policy it is to inspire selfish and sudden hopes, are distinguished for their tumult and disorder.

We must not only ask whether there is joy, but what kind of joy it is. Is it humble?—self-distrustful? Is it a delight in God and Christ, the law and Gospel; and in a life devoted to the culture of holiness? or is it inspired merely by a vain imagination that we shall be saved?

2. How solemn and overwhelming is the responsibility of all who are stationed to watch for souls, as those that must give account, or who in Divine Providence are called in any manner to guide them in the way of salvation! When we reflect that the ministry is a savor of life unto life, or of death, shall we not say, indeed, who is sufficient for these things? Would not an angel, unsustained by communications of Divine wisdom and grace, be crushed by the burthen? Oh! what will be the embittered reflections in another world, of those who hear the shrieks and moanings of lost spirits chiding them with having cried peace, peace, when there is no peace; and thus lulled by them down to the fiery and returnless abyss! On the other hand, there is danger of breaking the bruised reed, and quenching the smoking flax—of pushing on the wounded spirit to the madness and stupidity of desperation, instead of healing by the balm of that grace, which, where sin abounds, doth much more abound; and of thus becoming a minister of death, and not of life. A rude and vain novice, who is unskilful in the word of righteousness, will be liable to err on either hand, either to heal slightly the hurt, or to hurt only to administer poison and death, instead of healing. Oh! how much of that wisdom which cometh from above, and is profitable to direct, is needed by ministers, in order that they may rightly divide the word of truth, or that they may be sons of thunder to the perverse and presumptuous, and sons of consolation to all contrite spirits; and so by words fitly spoken, feed souls with the bread of life? To this end, how greatly do they need the prayers of their people; and how awful the position of crude novices, who, ignorant of Divine truth, are set as shepherds over the flock of God; but know

not whether they are leading them to the green pastures of Divine truth, or the poisoned herbs of error and delusion.

3. This subject sheds light upon the period at which recent converts ought to make a visible profession of religion. The practice has been, and if I mistake not, still is widely prevalent, of gathering in all the subjects of an all-pervading religious excitement, as soon as they express a hope of their faith and obedience; nay, of urging and persuading them to this course as soon as the needful arrangements can be made. Now, all experience proves this course to be perilous. Under preaching the most sound, thorough and searching, every genuine and extensive revival will affect and startle more or less, and work in them a superficial and temporary change, who will speedily make it manifest that they have no root in them, and are not radically changed according to a beautiful comparison of Edwards, during the blossom and fragrance of a revival. There will be many fair blows that will bring forth no fruit to perfection, or, at best, none but bad fruit. In a short season the true character of such will develope and unfold itself. They will show that they have no relish for true religion. On how much larger scale will this occur, if artificial stimulants of the animal passions, and a superficial style of preaching are employed? Does not every dictate of prudence and benevolence bid us wait a brief season, that we and they may see whether there is ground of a comfortable persuasion that they are new creatures, or whether they are answering their consciences with insincere vows? Even after the utmost precaution, tares will be mixed with the wheat. But without this precaution, tares will so prevail, that we shall, at best, only be able to say the wheat is scattered sparingly among the tares. Is it said that the apostles received their converts at the moment of conversion in the days of Pentecost? I answer, the persecution which tests stony ground hearers was experienced in all its rigors on the spot. And when *we* have the supernatural gifts for searching the heart which were vouchsafed to the apostles, such reasonings may be more timely. But until then, our only basis of judging ourselves and others is this: by their fruits ye shall know them—and there must be reasonable opportunity to observe those fruits. It has been said that the remedy for premature admissions to the church is discipline. I answer; the piety of the churches now will scarcely sustain a wholesome

and effective discipline; and under the state of things contemplated, all discipline would be utterly prostrated. Besides, it is a cruel idea to construct our proceedings on the very design of bringing persons needlessly under pains of ecclesiastical censure. It is a mistaken idea, that entrance to the church is a completing and confirming part of a regeneration, otherwise defective and uncertain. The new creation exists as it does. If it does, it will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Union to the church, and enjoying its ordinances, is a divinely appointed means of sanctification; not of conversion: which latter notion is the error of the half-way covenant system, long since exploded. On the other hand, there is danger of a contrary extreme. Many delay a profession of religion beyond all reasonable limits, while they hope they are new creatures; they are ever waiting for more light and evidence; and in consequence of the neglect of so momentous a duty and privilege, clouds and darkness thicken around them, until they lose all evidences and all sensible delight in religion. No person of mature years ought long to indulge a hope which does not lead him to confess Christ before men, unless prevented by obstacles beyond his control. But in regard to the period which should intervene between hopeful conversion and union to the visible church, no uniform and unvarying rule can be laid down. It depends on a thousand circumstances, such as age, understanding, knowledge, capacity to discern the Lord's body, the clearness of evidence to themselves and others, all which must be weighed in all good conscience, with an unfeigned desire to do the will of God.

Lastly. There is reason to fear that every congregation comprises some stony-ground hearers, both among and out of its list of church members. Are there none such here? Would to God there were none. If there are, who does not say, Lord, is it I? is it I? And are not all urged by the danger of self-deception, to examine themselves, whether they indeed be in the faith? And if such an examination should prove that I might of a truth say, thou art the man, would it not be worth ten thousand worlds?

And what shall be said of those who are not even so much as stony-ground hearers? Who have no appearance or pretence of faith, either in their own or others' view? Who confessedly do not allow the word to reach and penetrate even the surface of the soul? If these things be in the green tree, what shall be in the dry?

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1841, in the Clerk's Office of the Southern District of New-York, by W. H. Bidwell.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 5. Vol. XV.) MAY, 1841. (Whole No. 173.

SERMON CCXCIX.

BY REV. WILLIAM ADAMS,

PASTOR OF THE CENTRAL PRESB. CHURCH, NEW-YORK.

Delivered on the Sabbath after the DECEASE OF THE LATE PRESIDENT HARRISON.

"*Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?*" Isaiah, 2: 22.

The believer in a superintending Providence, who presides over all the affairs of men, can find no apology for inattention to passing events. Conduct so indevout, is rebuked alike by reason and Scripture. No knowledge is so practical and important to ourselves as the knowledge of God. But how is this to be acquired? Are not his *acts* the best exponents of his character? Are not the dealings of his Providence his own living voice, with which he speaks to the children of men, in language distinct and audible? The utmost modesty, I know, becomes a being of yesterday, when attempting to scan the ways of Him whose counsels are a great deep. Stretching over so large a space, and requiring the whole of time for its completion, many parts of the great plan of Providence must remain inscrutable and mysterious to our mortal vision. They are like the many springs and wheels of an involved and intricate mechanism; seemingly they work adverse one to another, but when the result comes out, the harmony of the whole will be seen. It is but a part of God's ways which we see; and the adaptation of one event to another, on a vast scale, and the fitness of all events to a final end, can be made clear only when the whole plan is completed.

It is plain, therefore, that the dealings of Providence never can supersede the necessity of a written revelation, as a method of human instruction. These are too involved and incomprehensible to be a guide unto the simple. Seemingly discordant and irreconcilable, by themselves, they would often confound the wisdom of the wisest, and perplex the mind of the most studious and saga-

cious. Observe, accordingly, the fallacious construction which men, unenlightened by revelation, have put upon passing events to their own bewildering and distress; perverting, oftentimes, the mysteries of Providence into the service of error and superstition. It is the Scriptures of God which alone are capable of interpreting aright the movements of Providence. God cannot deny or contradict himself. It is his word which explains his Providence—it is his Providence which illustrates and confirms his word. Whatever appears dark and adverse in outward events, religion teaches us to resolve into the wisdom of Him who seeth the end from the beginning, and who out of seeming evil evolveth good; while, in return, the dispensations of Providence paint to the eye and trumpet to the ear of man, those various lessons of piety which, when taught in other forms, often fail to affect him. Hence it generally occurs, that deeper impressions and more powerful effects are produced, when the declarations of God concerning the vanity of all things human are repeated in the solemn tones of afflictive events, than when read on the printed page, or heard in the calm retreats of the sanctuary.

The rational faculties attain to their best exercise when removed as far as possible from things sensible, into the region of the abstract and spiritual; but the *heart* of man feels the most acutely, when, withdrawing from things remote, it is made to bear the pressure of things near, visible and tangible. When thus stricken by the hand of God, and full of sorrowful experience, the voice of man is no farther needed, except it be to interpret Providence, and guide the emotions already excited in consonance with religion.

You have already anticipated, my brethren, the application of these remarks to that recent dispensation of Divine Providence by which God is to-day speaking to this whole people; the aspects and relations of which are so public and prominent, that not to observe them would betray the most criminal levity. For the first time since the organization of our civil government, its chief executive officer has been removed by death. That is a novel experience through which this nation is now passing. Never before have we been taught, after this manner, the nearness of that relation which connects each and every citizen in our land with the man who is elevated to preside over its affairs. Observation has misled me, if it be not true, that this event has developed a beauty and a power in this feature of our government which before was never even suspected. Our red brethren in the West have always been accustomed to designate the President of the United States as their "Great Father." It is a title far above that of king or emperor. Amid the asperities of political excitement, and the collisions of party feeling, men have scarcely thought of any such relation; but when death has come to sunder the tie, a whole people is visited with a sorrow, in some respects, not unlike that which

children feel when bereaved of a parent. Men are actually surprised to find themselves thus affected. In their animated desire to elevate favorite candidates to the chair of chief authority, they had not even thought that there was, in every bosom, a latent feeling of personal relation to that office itself, which, in an event like that which has now occurred, would create a common sympathy superior to sectional preferences and party animosity.

My motives, in alluding thus distinctly to this mournful event, cannot be misconstrued by those who will testify that this sacred desk was never prostituted to the purposes of party. The ministers of religion are called to a higher vocation than to indulge in political speculations, or supply fuel for political excitement. Leaving it for others to discuss what are to be the probable effects of this unexpected providence on our civil affairs, it will be my province, as a teacher of religion, to present those aspects of the event which are consonant with the instructions of the holy Sabbath.

1. I cannot but think that this dispensation of Providence was designed to teach this people the vanity of *human dependence*. It has pleased God to accomplish most of his purposes on earth by human instruments. Now it is one of the most common modes in which the natural atheism of the human heart developes itself, that there should be so prevalent a disposition to deny the agency of the Supreme, and confide entirely in an arm of flesh. It is so in the family. Children hang upon a father, and think scarcely at all of that higher hand on which he himself and they depend. So it is in the church. There has ever been a proneness to trust in favorite men and measures, forgetful of her entire dependence on her invisible Lord and Head. Pre-eminently so is it with the state. It is frightful to think what an amount of atheism there is in reference to civil affairs. More confidence is felt and expressed in the wisdom of man than in the all-wise and powerful agency of God. The sagacity of rulers, the skill and experience of governors, the prudence of legislators, the wisdom of cabinets; in short, the agency of man in some form occupies a place, in the thoughts of man, far above all sense of dependence on Him, who, from on high, declares "counsel is mine and sound wisdom: by me kings reign, and princes decree justice; by me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth."

To cease from this dependence on men and to trust in God only, while it is the first lesson of piety, is one of the most difficult of all attainments. Therefore it is that God employs violent measures to aid its accomplishment. Intending that men should devoutly recognize his superintending authority, he breaks down and casts aside the instruments which have been made to occupy his place. He enters the domestic circle, and removes the "strong staff" on which many lean, that wounded hearts

may turn to Him and put their trust in Him only. He visits his church, and selecting those who are as the pillars of the house of God, to whom Zion looks as to her great strength, puts them in the grave that He may be exalted, and in him alone may his people trust. In like manner he invades the nation which has grown unmindful of him, frustrates its wisest counsels, disappoints its most sagacious anticipations, and removes its chosen helpers.

Let it not be set down as an arrogant and presumptous attempt to interpret the providence of God, when I remark, that (if a disposition to trust in ourselves characterizes us as a people,) then there has been a series of remarkable events in our recent history which appear to have been designed expressly for its rebuke and correction. I look back to a period less than ten years ago, and recount the consternation which pervaded this city,

> "——When the blessed seals
> "Which close the pestilence were broke,"

and thousands were withering, in a moment, before the breath of the great destroyer. Emphatically walking in darkness, as it did, evading the researches of science after its causes and its cure, it would seem that God intended that this visitation should be resolved into his own immediate agency, thereby teaching men their entire dependence on him for life, and breath, and all things. Did that religious feeling extend, and was it perpetuated as designed? Was God recognized and adored in this terrible event as he should have been? A short interval elapsed, and the scourge again returned. Was it productive of the intended effect? Or was there an abounding atheism which provoked the displeasure of heaven? Not many months passed away and the hand of God was again visible in another form. The devouring element, gaining ascendency over man, consumed, in a single night, millions upon millions of wealth. A spectator of that terrible scene myself, and an observer of the dismay which, for a season, existed, I confess to you that the impression made on my mind of the criminal inattention to the hand of God, and the indomitable spirit of self-confidence and self-dependence which almost universally prevailed, is even now as painfully distinct in my recollection as are the terrors of that eventful night. It was hard to humble ourselves under the hand of God; and the elasticity of a self-confident spirit threw off the pressure, and went forth again in its own strength. Again did God assert his own supremacy, and bring to nought the counsels of the wise. Unexampled embarrassments perplexed all mercantile affairs, and men's hearts failed them from looking for the things which were to come to pass. And again it was hard to discern the agency of God in all this, and devoutly to recognize our constant dependence on him for stability of purpose and cer-

tainty of success in the marts of business, in the relations of credit, and in the paths of the sea. Again was the spirit of self-confidence permitted to develope itself, we fear, with too much of a real disregard to the voice and providence of God. Various measures for relief were proposed and urged; divers opinions advanced; parties were formed; favorite schemes discussed; some looked to the right hand, and some to the left; some to this man, and others to that; but few, we fear, looked upward to Him from whom help cometh. And now, when the utmost wishes and hopes of the majority were accomplished, I hear a voice from heaven, saying, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; put not your trust in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help, whose hope is in the Lord God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is."

The agency of God in the affairs of nations is as real as in the concerns of individuals, and never does a nation attain unto His favor, till this supreme authority is devoutly recognized in all that pertains to internal economy, to foreign relations, to the pursuits of business, and the enactment of laws. That people whom God intends to bless he will afflict, till every human dependence be forsaken, and the lesson be learned and practised, of an habitual acknowledgment of his presence, a strong confidence in his arm, and a careful obedience unto his commandments.

2. The tendency of that event we are now considering, I observe, in the next place, must be to rebuke and allay a prevailing *spirit of party*.

No one has been a calm observer of recent events without experiencing many sad regrets in view of the prevalence of this great evil, and many forebodings in reference to its probable issue. Am I required to define the lawful limits of party preferences, and demonstrate in what cases it is excessive and disastrous? I have only to reply in a word,—that spirit of party is evil, and only evil, which is superior to the claims of pure patriotism, and the expression of which is allied to passions selfish, vile and corrupt. It has been urged by some, as a serious objection to the morality of the New Testament, that it omits to inculcate patriotism as a specific virtue. How groundless the objection is will appear, when we consider that patriotism is included within the great law of love, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, and thy neighbor as thyself;" and that to have insisted on the practice of patriotism by itself might have been to erect that into an independent feeling, separate from the universal claims of christianity; a feeling which when thus divorced is always prone, as history proves, to be excessive and ruinous.

Against life, and interest, and excitement even in relation to national affairs, religion has nothing to object; but a truly

patriotic heart, animated by pure motives, swelling only with virtuous emotions, can bear to be heated through and through without the ebullition of one angry or sinful feeling. Compared with this rule of love, how alarmingly prevalent have been the evils of a party spirit. How much that was truthless; how much that was selfish; how much that was unkind; how much that was angry, alas! how much has been said and done, the whole spirit of which was opposed to the love of country and to the love of God. And now, when brethren of the same household, citizens of the same country, were well nigh intoxicated with this feeling; when all was eagerness and excitement, a ghastly figure enters the arena—it is DEATH! He waves his skeleton arm, and all is still. What instructor is so impressive concerning the folly of strife as this speechless messenger! Did you ever stand by the grave of one against whom you had in life been at enmity? Was it not with a compunction of conscience that you looked down on the poor, helpless remnant of mortality, wondering how you could ever have quarrelled with a worm of the dust like yourself? How mean, how worthless, how unworthy appear those objects which party feeling has presented, in comparison with the sublime realities which death forces on the attention. What a great calm it brings over the agitated spirits of men. How it hushes noise—how it subdues excitement. I thank God that there are so many proofs that, before his own providence, party spirit has fallen prostrate, and that, in the presence of death, men are made to feel that they are brethren still. Let us hope that this effect may not be temporary or limited; but that a more conciliatory spirit, a spirit more consonant with the providences and word of God, may pervade the future counsels and conduct of this whole people.

3. Again, I observe that this dispensation of Providence was obviously intended to teach us the vanity of the world, the certainty of death, and the nearness of eternity.

In some respects the death of a king and a beggar are alike. The pains of dissolution are the same. The impotence of human aid are alike apparent. But in the effects produced on others by the decease of those whose circumstances are so dissimilar there is a difference. When death enters the cottage of the humble man, he teaches the sad lesson of human frailty but to few. When he invades a circle of wider relations, louder and more impressive are his monitions. But when, as now, he removes in an hour the most exalted in rank, God speaks therein unto a whole nation at once, saying, "all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The breath of man is in his nostrils, and wherein is he to be accounted of, at his best estate, but a frail, helpless, dying creature." If death sometimes assumes the air of friendship, and is greeted with a melancholy welcome when he comes to the relief of the abject and the forlorn, true and terrible is his aspect to the eye of mortals, when he dims the lustre of rank, humbles the

power and quenches the glory of life. Now is it that the world is taught, in a manner most impressive, that there is no exemption from the decree and power of the king of terrors. The lofty and the lowly, the rich and the poor, lie down together under his silent dominion.

It would be difficult to conceive of any combination of circumstances better adapted to impress a people with the vanity of all things earthly, than those in which death has now achieved his conquest. The individual who has fallen, occupied the very pinnacle of society. He had attained the utmost that a lawful ambition could desire; and while his glory was yet fresh upon him, the destroyer came. Scarcely had the intelligence of his official installation reached our remoter States, ere his earthly career was finished, and his soul summoned to the bar of God. We look back a little more than a month ago, and read again the records of that day, and survey the scene of splendor and of joy, and hear the shouts of a great multitude; and while we look and listen, already it has faded away like a dream. Instead of a shout, is the dirge; instead of the joyous procession, is the funeral train, the bier, and the urn. The shadow of death has passed upon it all. Who can behold the contrast without feeling how vain, how empty, how evanescent the highest honors which the world can give! What a lesson is conveyed by this event, especially to those who are high in office, and who, from the very influences which beset them, may be supposed to be most in danger of putting far away the thought of their own mortality!

> "The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
> "And all that beauty, all that wealth ere gave,
> "Await alike the inevitable hour;
> "The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

God is speaking unto this nation, that it is appointed unto men once to die, and after death cometh the judgment! Eternity, with its amazing realities, is very near. Very soon and the vast throng which yesterday moved through these streets, will, without exception, have passed beyond the scenes which now occupy them, into eternity. What then will be to us the honors or the obscurities of life? What to him, who is now engrossed in the solemn concerns of the eternal world, is the voice of eulogy—the solemn pageant, and these habiliments of mourning? Nothing are these to an immortal spirit. All, all on earth is shadow—that beyond is *substance*. And are no religious impressions to follow this public bereavement? Is it not a moment in which it may be expected that the thoughts of a whole nation would be turned to the life which is to come? Is the feeling which Providence has awakened to expend itself in forms and ceremonies? or is it destined to introduce and extend a more serious attention to eternal things, and a more general practice of devout piety? Fortunate for his own fame as was the time of death with this distinguished individual, thrice fortu-

nate will it prove if it shall appear to have been the means of conferring religious blessings on his countrymen. Should his untimely death be instrumental of giving a direction to the thoughts of this nation towards the truths of religion, greater benefits would thereby result, than could have followed the most prosperous administration of affairs.

4. There is one circumstance in connection with death which is very striking. It is the deep interest which is felt by survivors in the *moral character* of the departed. There is an eager inquisitiveness after the evidences of his preparation for death. There is an anxiety to know what was the conduct of the individual as he approached the confines of eternity. Did he show himself a christian? Did he express himself as being ready for the summons? Did he leave testimony that it was all well with his soul? This remarkable fact, my hearers, is one mode in which the human conscience testifies to the wisdom and necessity of being well prepared to meet a holy God. This universal habit has been forcibly brought to my attention in the present instance. With the religious character of the deceased I am wholly unacquainted. Of this I am not to speak. If evidences existed of true piety in his heart and life, most sincerely do I rejoice, praising God. But the fact of which I now speak, is the importance which is attached, in the judgment of all, to any acts, any expressions which indicate a religious turn of mind. Every thing else appears to be lost sight of in the presence of death. When the officers of state made official announcement of his decease, nothing was judged to be of greater importance to be told, than that his death was "calm and resigned." The fact that on entering the national mansion he had purchased a "Bible and Prayer-book," which, on the day of his interment, were placed beside his coffin—the fact that he signified to a religious attendant his purpose to connect himself with a christian church, on profession of his faith—why, my brethren, is so much interest attached to circumstances like these? Why do men, whether their own lives evince a regard to religion or not, speak of these facts as so very important? They are published—they are reported—they are the theme of conversation and inquiry. The reason is, as I have already said, that there is in the bosom of every man the consciousness that *true religion alone prepares any mortal to appear before the tribunal of God.* Nothing is more common than for the most irreligious, when death invades the circle of their nearest companionships, to make mention, as a matter of satisfaction, of every look, and act, and sign of the deceased, which evinced a preparation, on his part, for the great change. Every thing else loses its importance. When was it ever known, in these christian times, that the amount of a man's *possessions* was inscribed on his tomb-stone? The bare suggestion of such a thing would be construed as a mockery of death, under whose denuding hand the rich man leaveth the world naked as he entered it. But

if, in all his life, there was one virtue; in his moral character, one trait which can afford satisfactory evidence of God's approval, this, be sure, you will find sculptured in conspicuous characters on his monumental marble; and even there not half so deep, not half so imperishably, as on the hearts of surviving kindred.

One thing alone can prepare any for their last account. It is not rank, it is not honor, it is the belief and the practice of the Gospel of God. That which is highly esteemed among men, furnishes no passport to the presence of Divine Majesty. There is but one method of salvation proposed for any, for all. To be humble before God, is greater than to be exalted among men. To practice the duties of religion; reverently to walk with God; to be a penitent, sincere disciple of Jesus Christ; this, the world themselves being judges, is of paramount consequence in the hour when death comes to terminate this earthly existence.

As an evidence of this, I have adverted rather to the convictions and admissions of men themselves, than to the explicit teachings of inspiration. When we open the word of God, the only thing which we find revealed therein, is our relation to a future and endless life. And the inquiry which the word and Spirit of God urge upon our consciences in view of death always is, am I myself prepared for the solemn transit? Feeling as I do the propriety of these demonstrations of respect towards our chief magistracy, great is my fear amid it all, that outward show, the solemn pomp of sorrow, the requiem and the march, will divert the thoughts of many from those internal communings with death, judgment and eternity, which the visitations of Providence are adapted to create. And to-day, amid the thoughtfulness and calm of the holy Sabbath, I stand here to ask each one of my dear hearers whether he is himself prepared suddenly to be removed from the scenes which now absorb his attention to the solemnities of his final account. An impetuous current is fast bearing our bodies to the grave; whither, whither are our spirits tending? Is the great question decided or not, whether they have yet received a direction towards the city and the throne of God? Has the sting of death, which is sin, been extracted? Have we committed our souls unto the Conqueror of death and the grave? Have we trusted in Him who is the resurrection and the life? Have we fled for refuge and hope to Him who will occupy the throne of judgment, whose smile amid the world's convulsions will be life, whose frown will be despair and death? A satisfactory answer to inquiries like these, can alone sustain and calm in the hour when the world recedes, and its glory fades on the rayless eye. To be a true christian is the only thing which will avail when the dead, small and great, shall stand before the throne of God, and the character of each awaits its irreversible destiny. What then, in the words of the Son of God, is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

SERMON CCC.

BY REV. PROF. H. P. TAPPAN,
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HUMAN AGENCY IN THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE WORLD.

One of the series on the Conversion of the World, delivered in the Central Presb. Church, New-York.

"*Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?*"—Acts, 8 : 30, 31.

Four thousand years passed away after the fall of Adam before Jesus Christ appeared in our world. Why was his coming so long delayed? During this long period the oracles of God were confined to one small nation shut up within the mountain fastnesses of Palestine. Why were they not published universally? Eighteen hundred years have passed away since the advent of Jesus Christ: during this period gross darkness has not only overspread the greater part of the nations, but also the nominal and visible christian church; at the present day two-thirds of our race remain unevangelized; and even the so-called christian nations are not governed by christian principles; and what is still more sad and remarkable, the congregations and churches organized, and statedly meeting for christian worship, are, and profess to be, but in part converted to the spiritual dominion of Christ. Since God is omnipotent, and so benevolent as to be called "love" itself, why has he not expelled darkness and sin from the earth, and given a universal and complete triumph to the religion of the cross? If it be said that God has entrusted the work of evangelizing the nations to human agents, and they have proved unfaithful,—then the inquiry arises, Why has he entrusted it to such agents—why have not his benevolence and omnipotence united to speed the work by direct interpositions, or at least by adequate agencies?

There are two answers which may readily be given to these inquiries, according to the spirit in which they are made.

First, if they be made in the spirit of the unfaithful servant who was entrusted with the one talent, and refused to turn it to any profit, but went and hid it, because he believed his Lord to be an "aus-

tere man," and unjust in his requirements,—then we may reply, "out of thine own mouth" art thou answered and judged.

The facts which give rise to these inquiries, are facts which all alike admit; nay, they are facts which, if they involve difficulties, involve them in relation to natural religion as well as in relation to christianity; since natural religion, in affirming the omnipotence and benevolence of God, is also called upon to reconcile these difficulties with the palpable and continued ignorance, sinfulness and wretchedness of the world. If, then, either in relation to christianity or to natural religion, you are disposed to regard the Almighty as an austere being, and if you deem that he might have made a better world than the one in which he has placed us, or might have more speedily relieved it of the evils which oppress it, and that infinite benevolence must stand committed to such ends and endeavors; remember that the world is as it is, and that all speculations of this nature, and all murmurings against the constituted order of things will not alter them in the least degree; and that therefore the wisest course, on your own principles, will be to propitiate in the best way you can the favor of this infinite and dreaded Being; to discharge most exactly and perseveringly those duties of truth, mercy, and justice which he imperatively demands, and which are seconded by your own conscience; and especially if, notwithstanding all that may appear irreconcilable with perfect goodness, he has condescended to show to you in particular decisive marks of most gracious favor, it is both prudent and right to embrace these with an earnest and faithful heart, and to put them to a wise and reasonable use, that you at least may meet happily an account, to which it is not unjust that you should be called. What if the oracles of God were given anciently only to one small people, you do not live in the ages of this destitution. What if two-thirds of the world be yet without the Gospel, you have the Gospel. What if God do not by his omnipotence at once convert the world, and change the earth into a paradise of sinless and immortal beauty, you have made to you the plain and faithful offer of eternal life through Jesus Christ; you have the most excellent precepts of duty clearly laid down, and the promise of heavenly and most efficient aids and influences. To become a righteous man is the safest, wisest, and happiest course at all events. To become just such a character as Christ has expounded in his teaching, and exemplified in his life, is a glorious attainment. To devote yourself to those labors of benevolence which the Gospel imposes, will be a wise and useful life—infinitely better than the stale repetition of the pride, foolery, and sensuality of the world; it will be a twofold blessedness—blessing him that gives and him that takes; it will lead the soul gently and promisingly down to that dark grave which none can escape; and if there be a star of life and immortality to light up the dark cope of this world's gloom, and to guide us to the heaven we think and dream of, the rest which our wearied spirits long for, it is here —it is here! in the faith and the duties of the Gospel.

Secondly, if the inquirer be a meek and humble spirit, afflicted with suggestions offensive to his piety, then to such a spirit a relief will be most readily afforded, by pointing to the actual and indisputable indications of the divine goodness in the benign master-designs of nature, the beautiful movements of a watchful and faithful providence, and beyond all, in the mission of the Son of God. Whatever be the difficulties which exist, the goodness which does appear is so vast and peculiar that it is impossible to reconcile it with malevolence, or even with a divine nature austere and capricious. Besides, if we but view it aright, the very tendency in our minds to represent whatever in the order of the world appears to conflict with perfect goodness, as incompatible with the idea of God, does in reality form the most solid evidence that God cannot be otherwise than perfectly good, notwithstanding these apparent discrepancies. By supposition we look into nature, and with a critical eye we detect discrepancies; we look into the divine revelation, and with a critical eye we here also detect discrepancies. We remark, how can this, and this, exist under the government of an omnipotent and infinitely benevolent being? Can an omnipotent and perfectly good being permit the convulsions of nature, pestilence, and death? Can such a being allow sin to enter the world, or delay the advent of the Saviour four thousand years, or let the world remain unconverted for more than eighteen centuries after this advent, through the inefficiency and unfaithfulness of the agents to whom he has committed the trust of publishing the Gospel? But what does this questioning and this critical judgment imply? Have we then in our minds such a bright and transcendant idea of what God must be, that we can decide upon the order of nature, and the great moral movements unfolded in the Scriptures? Are we thus impelled by the very constitution of our being to demand in both, the realization of an archetype of infinite beauty and excellence, and to say of one form of creation, and one movement of providence, this is worthy of God; but of another form, and another movement to ask, How can this accord with perfect goodness united to omnipotence? And who gave us this elevated constitution of being, and kindled within us this bright and transcendant idea of what God must be? Surely it was God himself. Has he then revealed himself in the reason and conscience of man as he is and must be, and in creation and providence as he is not and cannot be? Has he given us the innate and necessary power of knowing him, only that in his works and in his moral administration we might be enabled to spy out his deficiencies and to see how unlike he is to himself? Has he constituted us merely to reverence and adore an idea, but to turn away in disappointment and sorrow from the reality? No, no, it cannot be; our earnest questionings respecting the apparent discrepancies in nature and in God's moral government, prove that we have within us the perfect idea of a perfect God; and from the very

constitution of the reason, as a faculty of the necessary and the absolute, God must be what reason affirms him to be. This inward teaching is God's own awful and melodious voice; the affirmation of the great I AM from the depths of the eternity which he inhabiteth, throwing its undulating notes into every mind in the widening circle of being. In the great truth affirmed here we cannot be mistaken. But we look out upon creation with eyes that observe only a few phenomena, and which do not pry into all the mysterious laws, agencies, and final causes of this stupendous nature: and we read the leaves of providence as a deep lore written in the language of heaven, wherein are revealed to us glimpses of a glorious signification and many clear and precious truths, but which nevertheless, in the introduction and the consecutive parts, has not yet been clearly construed in every passage, on account of its great reach of thought and its marvellous richness; and of which the peroration is reserved to be read in another world with eyes unbedimmed, when in the light of God we shall see light. God hath so made us that we can think of him only as infinitely wise and good, and we are ready to start up in alarm whenever anything presents itself which seems to conflict with this deep conviction; but when we reflect that the creation and the moral government in which we notice the discrepancy are His creation and government, we know that it must be only an appearance which, on account of the feebleness of our penetration, and the point of view at which we are placed, we are unable to explain. Our questionings and doubts respecting that which we see, can be accounted for only by admitting the great truth to exist in the reason which they appear to assail, and thus are self-destroyed, or rather are transmuted into a form of the most glorious and stable evidence. I doubt and question what I see, because I know most surely what God is; but the moment I reflect upon what he is, doubts and questionings cease, because what I see proceeds from him, and cannot be inconsistent with his nature. Thus may the meek and humble spirit repose peacefully on the convictions of its innermost and truest being, and bide its time until it shall know even as it is known.

But, nevertheless, it is not forbidden us to exercise all our powers of thought, and to avail ourselves of all the means of inquiry within our reach, to clear up, as far as we may, what is obscure; and that we may be enabled even now to see the bright footsteps of omnipotent love amid all the convulsions of nature, the conflicts and tumults of nations, the apparent delays of providence, and the feebleness of the appointed human instrumentalities.

I. One of the great principles in the ordering of the universe is that of PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT. No form of existence is presented at once complete and perfect. There are perfect elements of being and perfect laws, but not perfect and complete developments. The forms of vegetable life have their germination, their

budding, their flowers, their ripened fruit or seed, their stately and progressive growth: and when their decay comes on, it is but preparatory to a resurrection of new beauty without any interruption to the mysterious continuity of life. Analogous to this are the forms of animal existence: a feeble beginning, and a gradual growth and development of strength, beauty, and sagacity. By slow, secret, but sure processes, minerals are formed in the bowels of the earth. By the abrasion of rocks soils are collected, and barrenness is clothed with verdure, and waving forests spring up and become so ancient that no one can tell the story of their birth. The ocean gradually recedes from one continent and gradually approaches another, and the headlands and harbors of the ancient navigators are changed. In the ocean depths curious and minute operatives are busy, century after century, building up the coral caves and mountains, a fairy land of the watery world, and the stable foundations of future continents. Astronomy teaches us that in the wide and illimitable space nebulous matter is gradually concreting and forming into new worlds, and thus creation through endless ages is extending by processes which appear to us slow, but which are under sure laws. Geology has detected in our own globe signs which cannot be mistaken, indicating the gradual up-building of the crust on which we live, the formation of the mountains and the valleys, the rivers, lakes and oceans. God does not complete his works at once. The wonder, the beauty, and the glory of his skill appear in successive, and we may believe endless presentations of new forms of increasing perfection. In a given state and order of the world, for example, the earth as it has been prepared for man, the convenience and the beauty consist in successive changes. As we are constituted, one unchanging form of nature, even if it were a form of perfect beauty in itself, would pall upon us. We would not have all day and bright sunshine, but the quiet return of night with the soft light of moon and stars. We would not have the skies always fair, but sometimes veiled in the drapery of clouds, or quite shut out by falling showers. We would not have the fields always clothed with yellow harvests; we love also the seed-time, and the first springing of the green blade. We would not have trees and shrubbery always loaded with beautiful buds, nor yet with opened fragrant flowers, nor yet with ripe fruit; it is the orderly succession that we love. We would not have the atmosphere ever filled with loud piping winds, nor with gentle breezes, nor to lie in dead quietude; they are all grateful in the succession in which they come to us. As it is with nature, so also is it with man. Infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, and even old age, whose hoary head is a crown of glory, are all beautiful forms of life. Would we prefer that men should be produced full grown and with ripened powers, and that there should be no infancy, no childhood? With such a change it would seem to us that all the poetry and music of life had fled away. And the mind of man, the noblest of all God's creations,

how feeble and void at our beginning! We have not at once our fully-developed capacities, and all possible knowledge; but the mind strengthens and knowledge increases by slow degrees, with much pains-taking, from the budding-time of intellect and the simplest elements of learning. Were it not so, the dignity and excellence of mental discipline would be unknown; mind would not be presented under its different interesting phases of an upward growth; it would have no self-conscious strength in struggling onward in its own development; and by the supposition being created at once in its full and perfect form, there would not be the prospect and the aim of an immortal progression, nor the sublime stimulus to self-exertion derived from such a prospect. Every given state both of organized matter and of the immortal mind has its beauty, its fitness, and its benign end to answer; but it is still relatively imperfect, and its relative imperfection is the condition of a higher growth. Nothing is fixed and stolid, but all is moving in cycles of ever-varying beauty and uses, or is born into new dignities and powers.

The beginning and progress of philosophy, science and art furnish other illustrations. The world is presented to man subject to his observation and thought, his invention and appropriation. In his mind are the innate capacities which meet the world harmoniously, pre-constituted to know its laws and agencies, and to perfect its forms and materials. But no philosophy, or science, or art are revealed to him, he must work them all out for himself. And he has gloriously worked them out for himself. He has obeyed the powers of intellect wherewith God endowed him, he has used the world of which God made him the proprietor. God gave him neither his powers perfect, nor the world perfect; but God designed that by his own endeavors he should do much to perfect both; and hence we have profound philosophies and diverse and glorious sciences of the heavens and the earth, and multifarious arts of utility and beauty; so that the ancient world of man in his infancy, has become the altered world of man in the marvellous growth and outstretching of his powers. We have here, then, in the actual world a development of material forms and a progress of material perfection by natural agents and laws working onward by a graduated process; and a development of mind and the birth and growth of knowledges and arts, by the free and intellectual activities of man through successive centuries; and by these free and intellectual activities we have nature herself modified and perfected—for architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and landscape-gardening, are all improvements upon the beauty of nature; and we have the world filled with accommodations and comforts which did not before exist, through the useful arts which man has invented. And since government and law have been instituted by man under various forms and in various degrees of perfection, and the labors of the legislator and the philosopher have thrown more and more light upon the

first principles of social order, and the influences and the glory of science and art belong likewise to national destiny and character, the progress of the individual is but a type of the progress of nations.

Had all things at the first been made perfect by God, the whole order of the universe would have been reversed; and who will dare affirm that the order which would then have existed would have been wiser and more benign? Both nature and mind would have exhibited a fixed and rigid splendor and majesty. There would have been no history of the past, and no anticipation of the future, nothing to call forth activity, or to charm into being the visions of hope; there would have been no changing forms of beauty, but uniformity would sternly have reigned alone.

But it is not possible that either in matter or in created mind absolute perfection could ever exist, for absolute perfection can belong only to the infinite and eternal. If, therefore, progression were banished from the world, there would be a fixed form of imperfection without the possibility of improvement; for however beautiful and majestic a form of nature might be given, and however elevated and rich in gifts the form of mind selected for creation,—relatively to still higher ideas of beauty, greatness, and excellence, which could not but exist in the divine mind and admit of an actual development, the selected form would still be imperfect. A finite creation by an infinite Creator, and regulated by his laws, and under his watchful superintendence, must necessarily admit of indefinite and endless progression, ever giving new exhibitions of his wisdom and benignity. And such is the creation in which we live, and of which we form a part. A creation evidently on a scale more magnificent than one cast in a fixed and unchanging mould; for however magnificent the fixed and unchanging creation supposed might be, it would at length be far surpassed by the creation of progressing beauty and perfection, even although this last should have the most feeble and imperfect beginning.

Now it is perfectly plain that all objections made against the actual order of the world, and the actual movements of divine Providence, are really a demanding of God, why he did not begin the progressive movements which reign throughout his creation at a point of higher perfection, or why the succession is not more rapid? The presumption of such a demand cannot fail to strike every thinking and reverential mind. The great Architect and Governor knew best where to begin, and how rapidly to conduct the movement. The beauty and the wisdom which are palpable ought to beget child-like trustfulness with respect to what is yet hidden in his unfathomable counsels. Such objections and speculations are an abuse of the high powers wherewith he has endowed us. He has enabled us to see that all things are progressive, and to conceive of more perfect worlds and more perfect beings, not that we may find fault with that which is, but

that we may look forward joyfully and hopefully to that which is yet to come, and strive together in our free activities for its attainment.

Now I ask whether the developments of God's moral government, and the bestowment of high spiritual gifts and privileges, may not justly come under the principle of progression? And whether, in relation to his moral improvement and well-being, man may not justly be thrown upon his own free agency, as well as in relation to philosophy, science, and art? Had man never fallen, there would have been to every mind the same obvious propriety and fitness, and indeed necessity of a progressive moral improvement, as of a progressive intellectual improvement. But the inquiry which now troubles many, is the existence of sin itself, and the fact that it has been suffered to reign in the world for so many centuries. With regard to the existence of sin itself, let us at once relieve our minds from all painful inquiries by the reflection that it is an incidental evil. God, in imparting to man the high gift of freedom, made it possible for him to sin; nor could he have prevented him from sinning, but by infringing upon his free agency. Man chose to sin, and God in his wisdom suffered man to act out his free agency without interruption. Sin entered the world by the free act of man—he is its author. God in no wise can be the author of sin. The Bible thus represents the fact in the utmost simplicity, and then leaves it without comment or curious speculation—and there it is wisest for us to leave it. Now it appears from the Scriptures, that no sooner had man sinned than God began to develope a gracious system of measures for the removal of the evil and the final redemption of man.—The element of depravity had been lodged in the species by a law we are constrained to believe, not arbitrary, but lying in the most intimate constitution of our being, and this element brought forth its sad fruits in the whole history of man, while at the same time all the constitutive faculties of his being were showing their characteristics, their force, and their direction, in civilization, education, and refinement. God's gracious measures met the element of depravity. The general elevation of the race was progressive: the working of the element of depravity was progressive likewise: and there appeared together the most splendid forms of intellectual greatness, and the most loathsome forms of moral defilement. The gracious interpositions of God were made on the same great principle—they were progressive, as the progressive developments of humanity called for them; and they did not set aside, but stimulated the free activity of man to its highest and noblest exertion. From the beginning God clearly revealed himself, and made salvation possible, and vouchsafed the most kindly converse of heavenly visiters, and even spake himself in a paternal voice to those who sought him sincerely and devoutly. Twice he revealed himself

to the whole race,—at the creation and at the deluge, and continually sent his prophets among men. And it was not until the nations at large had been amply tried, that he selected one man to become the father of one distinct people, and gave them to have their compact and wonderful institutions among the rocks and mountain streams of Canaan, that they might be the conservatories of his oracles, not for themselves merely, but for the world, until the times appointed should be fulfilled.

The advent of the Saviour was placed not at the beginning of the world, nor yet at the end; but midway in the track of the successive generations. Had it been placed at the beginning, it would have met man in his feeblest development, it would have gained imperfect records, and might have appeared to the after generations as a dim and uncertain history of a remote antiquity. Had it been delayed until the end of the world, it would not have impressed itself deeply upon the advancement of society, and faith might have sickened in the long expectation. But placed midway, it burst upon the world when the experiment of almost every religion and every philosophy had been made for the moral elevation of man, and made in vain; when conquest was sated and universal dominion consolidated; when civilization was advanced, and learning and the arts had attained a proud eminence; when there was a general pause in the tumults of the nations; when there were abundant materials for it to operate upon, and the way was prepared for making its enduring records in books, and on the monuments of art, and for diffusing itself through all the elements and interests of society. It was placed at the point where it could collect around it the mighty energies of a progressing humanity, and shape them to new ends and higher destinies; where it could appropriate the arts and discoveries which had already attained a high perfection, and become the patron of still more signal triumphs of the human mind; and lastly, it was placed where a prospective and a retrospective faith could meet under similar advantages, and where old prophecies would be fulfilled in attestation of its validity, and new prophecies be given to serve by their fulfilment in after ages, the same end. Is it possible to conceive of a period in the long march of humanity more auspicious to the introduction of christianity, than the period when Christ actually appeared?

Since the advent, the destinies of man and the movements of christianity have again faithfully exhibited the phases of the great principle of progression. Christianity was indeed introduced by miracles, by signs and wonders, and there was a reason for this supernatural display: but ever since there have been no sudden movements and no extraordinary indications: there have been all the activities of man at work for good and ill as from the beginning, but on wider spheres and with more stupendous results; while christianity, with a divine power indeed, but un-

der laws which ever respect the constitution of the human mind and the condition of society, has been permeating the whole mass, and leading on with various success, by slow degrees, but with sure aim, her final and universal triumph. Nature has been progressing. Philosophy, science, and art have been progressing. The general development of humanity and the destinies of nations have been progressing: and with all, and in some sense in all, christianity, containing the higher life and the ultimate end of all, has been progressing likewise. When the grand consummation shall arrive, we shall have a more glorious, serene, and beautiful nature—there will be "a new heaven and a new earth;" a peaceful ordering of the nations—"nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more;" a glorious diffusion of the truth, for we shall "walk in the light of the Lord;" and the universal reign of righteousness, love and blessedness—"There shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face." Such is the universal constitution of the divine government, and it is wise, beautiful, and benign throughout.

II. Another great principle of the Divine government, which we now proceed to notice, is the employment of fixed, definite, and appropriate agencies for the accomplishment of its ends. These agencies are two-fold: they are natural, necessitated and irresponsible; or they are intellectual, free and responsible.

By natural agencies the planets are impelled and guided in their revolutions; the seasons are led through their circuit; day and night are given; animal and vegetable productions are sustained and multiplied; and the whole economy of nature harmoniously and bountifully ordered. The laws which God has ordained are rigidly observed. The velocities of the planets are not changed. No new power is substituted for gravitation. The force of wind, steam, lightning, and floods remains the same. There is no vacillation, no hurry, and no delay; but the great progression of nature is led on by the powers, and according to the laws which His wisdom assigned to this department of His universe. Every agent has its characteristics, and its sphere in which to operate. Now were God frequently to set aside these natural agencies by direct interpositions, he would exhibit himself either as capricious in his determinations, or as miscalculating in his plans. He does indeed sometimes interpose and suspend a law of nature, or produce effects beyond the reach of these laws; but these are *miracles* or *wonders*, extraordinary and unlooked for, and introduced not for the perfecting of his system of nature, but for the accomplishment of some great moral end. The wisdom, majesty and goodness of God in nature, are displayed in the uniformity of the great elements, forces, and laws which he originally appointed, and in the unbroken system which he maintains.

The same adherence to his original appointments appears in the moral world. God has appointed no natural agents to institute government and laws among men, to invent arts, to perfect the sciences, to communicate knowledge to the human mind, and to carry on, in general, the progression of humanity; neither has he appointed any supernatural agents to do these; nor yet does he step forth to do these by the immediate exertion of his own omnipotence: these are the appropriate and the appointed work of man alone, just as the various movements and developments of nature are the appropriate and appointed work of natural agents alone. Now it is evident, that the propagation of christianity lies fully and fairly within the domain of human agency. The arts of printing and navigation, of propulsion by steam, of making roads and bridges, and of course the arts of working in various metals, and of manufacturing paper and other materials, the cultivation of mathematics, mechanics, astronomy, chemistry, and natural science in general, are all necessary subsidiaries. So also the translation of the Bible, of Tracts, and kindred books into various languages, the institution of schools, and the instruction of men in reading and other branches of learning, and last of all, the preaching of the Gospel, are all plain and indispensable means of evangelizing the world.

Whatever spiritual influences God vouchsafes, these influences do not remove the necessity of the various applications of the appointed human agencies.

Now, one may ask, why does not God reveal at once the sciences and arts necessary to the spread of the Gospel; or why does he not employ angels instead of men to teach the ignorant and preach the Gospel? Indeed, it is not necessary to stop here, but we may at once advance to the inquiry, Why does not God, by a signal and inevitable act of his omnipotence, without delay, enlighten and convert all the nations? But is it not plain, that all such inquiries imply that God, after having ordained a great system of secondary powers and agencies with their appropriate spheres—agencies ordained for the very purpose of accomplishing certain ends, should, under certain emergencies, set them all aside, and become himself the universal and only agent? thus capriciously making and unmaking—adopting plans and systems, and nullifying them—calling agents into being, and reducing them to nonentity. As well might we ask, Why did God make worlds, and moral and natural agents? Why did he exert his creative powers at all, and not dwell in the eternal solitude of his own infinite being? The very fact of creation involves the idea of constituted powers and agencies, of regulated systems and processes, of progressive movements, and of phenomena mediately produced. Nor would the absurdity of such inquiries be obviated by admitting the wisdom of allowing the natural agents to move on in an unimpeded course, and thus preserving the integrity of

the original design of nature; but requiring, that, in respect of the welfare of moral beings, the ordinary secondary agencies should be overleaped by supernatural agencies which should more rapidly and effectually secure the aims of benevolence—for the moral agencies are the higher of the two, and form the most glorious displays of the divine wisdom; and it is just here that God may be conceived to be most deeply interested in maintaining the full and uninterrupted progression and development of his great original plans. Besides, the very idea of a constituted moral agency forbids such a supplanting of the human by the divine. A moral agent is a free agent. It is his freedom which essentially makes him moral or responsible. But the communication of such a high gift, of a trust so momentous, pre-supposes that it shall not be interfered with; for the agent loses his responsibility the moment the acts, for which he has been held responsible, are taken out of the sphere of his own causality and made the appropriate effects of another cause. Thus the whole form and character of the moral world would be changed, and it would become absurd to speak any more of the dignity, worth, and interests of moral beings. If God cannot subserve the interests of moral beings without nullifying their proper agency, then he is presented in the light of making a bold and hazardous experiment, and after conducting it to a certain point, becoming suddenly alarmed, and preventing any farther development by crushing together the co-working elements into a confused mass, and recalling into the repose of his own nature all the energies and laws which he had given out. But we cannot make such an unworthy supposition. No, no, we have a nobler order in the universe of God! He has ordained his natural agents—given them their scope, their distinct potentialities, and linked them to their proper phenomena; and here we have the harmony, beauty, and goodness of the great system of nature. He has likewise ordained his moral agents a higher and nobler order of agents, because made after his own likeness in intelligence and the power of choice. These have also their scope and potentialities, and have arrayed before them what they may and *ought* to do; duties which they may neglect and violate, and so incur guilt and condemnation; or in the faithful performance of which they may meet with immortal rewards. That which the natural agents are commissioned to do, is done by them and not by other agencies. That which the moral agents are commissioned to do is done by them, and not by other agencies. This is the order of the universe. And now we see that in relation to the moral agents, while God gives them a noble sphere of labor, and provides them with abundant and apt materials, and ministers to them every requisite influence, and implants within their own being the first principles of all truth, and the constitutive forms of every possible knowledge, they are required to go

forth to the inventions of art, the discoveries of science, the constitution of government, the cultivation of the earth, the institutions of learning—to all that is possible for the development of mind, and the elevation and improvement of the race. Christianity takes her place among the other objects of human activity. As God provided the world with all the suitable means and appliances for a successful and productive industry, so also has he provided christianity with all her heavenly revelations, her gracious and supernatural aids, and her sublime and immortal prospects, for all the higher and spiritual energies of our being. Redemption from sin and eternal life are made possible to every individual in the atonement of Christ and the mission of the Spirit; but then they are actually attained only through the activity of the free moral agent himself, working out his own salvation with fear and trembling. The deliverance of the whole race from the guilt of sin, and the element of depravity in the human nature, a universal diffusion of spiritual knowledge, a universal elevation, refinement, and sanctification, the transformation of the world into a region of love, peace, and blessedness, are embraced within the scope of christianity; but then men are the appropriate agents appointed to open communications between the most distant nations; to translate books into different languages; to instruct ignorant men, and to carry and preach the Gospel to the destitute. The order, harmony, and fitness of the moral constitution of the universe clearly assigns this to human agents. God, in his highest heavens, is doing his own appropriate work, and is co-working in all the subordinate powers and agencies which he has ordained. He has assigned to the heavenly hierarchies, the Cherubim and Seraphim, their appropriate work. He has assigned the great physical powers their appropriate work. He has also given to man his appropriate work; and here it lies—our field is the world. The purification and redemption of our being; the development and redemption of our whole race—this is our work. God does not step down from his high throne to do directly, by his own omnipotence, what he has appointed the angels to do; nor does he remove out of the order of his physical agents what his wisdom at first assigned to their laws and forces; neither does he descend to earth to take out of our hands those great labors of benevolence which fitly belong to us, and thus give us an opportunity to repose in indolence, or to pursue freely the puerile plans of our own pride, sensuality, and covetousness. His wisdom and benevolence are displayed in the orders of agencies which he has ordained, and the sublime and glorious ends which are actually accomplished by, or are made possible to those agencies. It was wisdom and benevolence to give us these high capacities, and to place us in a world so richly furnished: ours is the folly and the guilt, if science and the arts remain hidden, and the earth lie unimproved under our

hands. It was wisdom and benevolence to reveal life and immortality through the cross of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit: ours is the folly and the guilt, if we who have received the heavenly mission do not avail ourselves of it for our own salvation, and do not speed it on its way among all the people and kindreds of the earth. It is not for us to ask, Why does not Omnipotence and infinite benevolence at once accomplish its work? Omnipotence and infinite benevolence has accomplished its work. It is we that are dilatory; it is we that refuse or delay to do our work—that most honorable and sublime work to which we are fitted and called in this grand order of the universe. God has provided us the light by which to see, and shall we now close our eyes and call upon omnipotent benevolence to produce directly in our minds the phenomena of vision? God has made us capable, by industry and thoughtfulness, of improving our condition, and providing on every hand comfort and convenience; and shall we fold our hands and call upon God to work miracles in order to save us from the necessity of exertion? God has brought us salvation by the sacrifice of his Son, and instead of laying hold upon it eagerly and joyfully, shall we yield ourselves to indifference and worldliness, and wait for his omnipotence and benevolence to lead us to the cross by a miraculous compulsion? God has put the Gospel into our hands as his honored almoners, and he commands us to give it to all nations; and shall we each one begin to make excuse, and turn away to our pleasures, our schemes of ambition and covetousness, and dream away this short but momentous life, and reply to the divine command, "Lord, cannot thine own omnipotence and love do this work at once, and save us the toil, the anxiety, and the self-denial?" Yes, he could do the work, but then why are we made moral agents? what is our being worth? what place do we hold? what end do we answer in God's creation, and why are we placed under such high appointments? He could do the work, but the doing of it would imply the annihilation of our moral nature, and involve our utter worthlessness, and our unworthiness of such a high interposition. God is continually exerting his agency in our behalf; ten thousand are his secret and benign ministrations, like the falling drops of dew, and he has made, and is making for us stupendous interpositions of grace. But there is one point where in the harmony and perfection of his universal order he must pause, or he would violate that order, and that is, where to interpose would be to infringe upon or set aside the moral agency which he ordained as the pre-eminent glory of his creation.

III. There is yet another point of view in which this subject is to be placed. The progressive development and perfection of our being is the great and benign end which God contemplates in respect to man. "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Now the developments and virtues to which we may attain, lose at once their distinctive characteristics, and their high and peculiar value, the moment they are conceived of as the necessary product of foreign agencies, and not of our own inner and responsible being. The arts and sciences, whether arrived at by our own invention and observations, or acquired from others, derive their value not merely from the conveniences, enjoyments, and knowledge with which they furnish us,—they derive their highest and most lasting value from the fact that their attainment involves the permanent enlargement and cultivation of our mental faculties. These arts and sciences known in this infancy of our being, will appear but as elementary and limited acquisitions in the future glory of our being. But they have a most important bearing upon those high energies and the wide range of knowledge prospectively opening upon us. In the efforts of the intellect to know and comprehend, it becomes more apt and vigorous to know and comprehend, and thus becomes prepared for yet higher and higher knowledges, and those sublime exertions of thought which belong to a nobler state. Thus do we know ourselves and feel our strength, and plume our wings for a heavenward flight.

But yet more strikingly does this principle appear in the moral virtues. Benevolence, justice, and truth are not mere contemplations and speculations. They imply and demand in their several relations, voluntary and persevering exertions. In order to be holy—to be God-like—to be prepared for the fellowship and enjoyments of the heavenly state, these virtues under their various modifications must be inwrought, and pervade our whole moral being as delightful, congenial and habitual inspirations. And these cardinal and all-comprehending virtues are of such a nature that they can never limit themselves within a given number of objects, or within certain times. Wherever and whenever the objects and occasions of truth, justice, and benevolence appear, there must we voluntarily and cheerfully exert ourselves in administering these virtues. Had we spent ages in the practice of these virtues, we should not be relieved in the least degree from the obligation to exert ourselves to the utmost, whenever new objects and occasions should appear. Now in forming for ourselves a holy character in a world like ours, we cannot escape from the multiform duties which are opened to us on all sides in the ignorance, the sinfulness, and miseries which abound. In a less wretched world, less would be demanded; but it is the condition of all virtue to answer the demands which are actually made.

What a sphere of moral discipline is then afforded in our world! Whatever be the origin of the wretchedness of our world, for all the purposes of moral discipline, it is enough for us that it exists. Whether omnipotent goodness might not con-

sistently relieve it without delay, is a mere speculation. But that we are bound to exert our moral agency in relation to all the forms of evil presented, is an unquestionable truth resulting from the very nature of virtue itself. Sin and sorrow have made this world their home, and he that goes forth as the minister of mercy will be subjected to severe labors; but they are labors which, while outwardly sowing good seed abroad in the wide field, are nourishing in the soul all the springs of spiritual vitality and blessedness. There is no form of virtue but what is called forth into activity by the state of our world. There is, therefore, in God's universe probably no school of virtue so richly prepared for the purposes of the highest discipline which can be imposed upon the soul. From a cup of cold water given to a forlorn and forsaken wretch, to the sublime charity which aims to spread the Gospel like the morning light over the darkened world, lie the gradations of the benevolence which are here marked out to us. Every day, every hour, every place gives its opportunities, reveals its duties, teaches its lessons, and may enable us to take another step upon the golden ladder which reaches to the skies. Such a world is peculiarly fitted as the pilgrimage of a sinner struggling after redemption, and the possession of the divine life. All evil passions rankle by nature in these bosoms of ours: but this is a world in which we may learn to bear sorrow with patience, to forgive injuries and to bless our enemies, to repress pride and envy, to deny our lusts, to do good even to the unthankful, and to live a life of godliness for the sake of its pure and unrewarded excellence. It is in this world that it can be said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit,—blessed are they that mourn,—blessed are the meek,—blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness,—blessed are the merciful,—blessed are the pure in heart,—blessed are the peace-makers,—blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake;" for it is in this world that the spirit is so tried and disciplined as to find blessedness in all these: and if it find blessedness in these, then hath it within itself the well of living waters springing up unto everlasting life.

But the discipline of the soul in relation to God is provided for in the state of our world, no less than in relation to man. Had God relieved man from all scientific investigation by directly revealing to him the constitution of his own being and of the world, man could not have manifested that earnest passion for knowledge which is implied in those voluntary labors by which he now travels upwards to the sun-lit pinnacles of truth: and so also, had He relieved him from all toilsome inquiry, and the possibility of doubt, in respect to the Divine nature and government, and the mediatorial system, that most worthy and sublime desire to know God and "the invisible things of Him," and that noble faith, which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen" would not

have been developed. God has made us capable of knowing him, and he has presented the world and the mediatorial system to us under such forms and signatures, that we need not fail of attaining a clear conviction of what He is, and a most blissful assurance of his favor; but the attainment requires a meek, trustful, reverential, truth-loving spirit, a deep and serious tendency to the pure and the divine, a supreme appreciation of the spiritual, an intense longing after God and immortality, and a diligent, wise and persevering application of our best powers. It is meet that beings constituted as we are, should exert ourselves to collect all the scattered rays of the divine light, and thus struggle onward from dim perceptions to a perfect vision, and then will the perfect vision be most fully enjoyed, because we loved at the beginning the most feeble rays. There is nothing better or clearer in the world than christianity, and he that will not receive it, because it is not good and clear enough to satisfy the demands of his intelligence, hath neither the meek wisdom of the true philosopher, nor the reverential and earnest love that feeleth after God, if haply it may find him. It is with duty as it is with knowledge and faith. God has not commanded us to the duties laid down in the Gospel by an audible voice spoken to each one of us: the duties are addressed to our hearts and consciences. There surely is no higher form of benevolence possible, in our world, than that which forms the great aim of christianity. To perform these duties, even if they should prove a misconception of the divine will, would show such an attachment to that exalted moral excellence which cannot but enter into the divine character, and such a sincere spirit of obedience, that the misconception could not but be shielded by the principle which attended it. It would be far wiser and better to run the risk of mistaking a particular duty, than never to call into action the most essential principle of virtue. Such, then, is the state of our world, and such our position is it under the Gospel, that we can give the most decided proof of a disposition truly to know God, and faithfully to do what is pleasing in his sight. Whatever doubtfulness may surround us forms but a noble discipline of the intellect and the heart. And how amply shall we be repaid at the last, if we find that the doubtfulness was only that which always attends the incipient efforts of the mind in seeking after all knowledge, and which faded away as we perseveringly moved onward, examining and thinking seriously and candidly and with fervent hope, and doing righteousness and mercy in pure love, until, arrived at the full stature of our being, we are prepared to see God and to hear his voice!

It is a beautiful economy which thus unites our highest duties to God and man with the cultivation of the highest principles of our nature. We cannot win heaven without becoming heavenly. But we cannot become heavenly without leading our fellow-men to heaven. We cannot be the children of God unless we love him and confide in him; but this child-like spirit becomes most deeply inwrought, and

honors God most when it appears fervent and cheerful and ready to obey, in the darkness as well as in the light, and soweth now in tears for the glorious harvest which is to come.

Shall we ask now, why the redemption of this world is so far committed to human agency? How rich, and clear, and abundant are the answers! Human agency is the fitting, congenial, directly effective, and the wisely appointed agency in the grand order of the world. Human agency accords with the great principle of progression which reigns through the wide universe of infinite wisdom. Human agency in this work, while it is fitting in relation to its objects, is no less fitting in relation to its actors, and proposes the discipline required for the formation of the character prescribed under the kingdom of heaven.

And again, barring all other considerations and inquiries, such is the nature of truth, justice, and benevolence—the cardinal virtues,—that they must apply themselves to their appropriate work, wherever the objects and occasions are presented. Without stopping to inquire into other methods of relieving the world or seeking for higher agencies, if we are good men, or if we would be good men, we must teach the ignorant, comfort the broken-hearted, and proclaim the Gospel to the lost, wherever we find them. It is our work, simply because it falls within our path. This will for ever be true; and in whatever part of God's universe we may be called to reside, the great principles involved will be binding upon us.

In committing the propagation of the Gospel to human agencies, God has not debarred any individuals or any age from its possession. For in every age the great truths of salvation have been proclaimed in the world; and men either would not go to the fountains which were opened, or when committed with the great trust of publishing it to all nations, they have failed to fulfil it. Twelve poor fishermen did more to realize the command of Christ than the nominal christian world have ever done beside.

It is time that we wake up to the magnitude and reality of this trust. THE GOSPEL IS TO BE GIVEN TO THE WORLD BY HUMAN AGENCY. When will it be accomplished? It will be accomplished when those who now have the Gospel do their duty. It might be done now. The Gospel is always attended with the same promises and spiritual influences, and prayer is always heard by the prayer-hearing God. The great failure has been in action. Has there not been failure in prayer? Yes—but men will never pray for the conversion of the world effectually and fervently, except as they are actually engaged in propagating the Gospel. Prayer supposes the intensest fervor of the soul, and this fervor will contentedly leave nothing undone that ought to be done. But have not the prophecies pointed ever to remote times when speaking of the conversion of the world? Prophecy is not the rule of duty, this rule is found in the plain command of Christ. Divine Wisdom, it may

be presumed, has intentionally thrown a sublime mystery over prophecy, lest it should be assumed as a rule of duty. The interpreters of prophecy, however, have not generally placed the grand consummation remote from their own times. The language is so peculiar as ever to have induced the impression "The Lord is at hand"—and indeed the Lord has ever been at hand. Looking at the power of the Gospel, looking at the promises, looking at what we are called to do, we are justified in affirming that the redemption of the world has been delayed by the dilatoriness and unfaithfulness of the human agents; and that the great consummation might have taken place centuries past but for this.

Prophecy as now interpreted, (and it seems more wisely interpreted now than ever,) lends us nothing but encouragement. But I repeat again, the prophecies are not our guide in this matter. Our great work is not the interpretation of prophecy, although this is a work great in itself: nor does our work mainly lie in profound speculations, although these be also demanded in their place. Our work is to preach the Gospel to every creature—by the press; by oral teachers, by Bibles, by Tracts, by schools, by every available means to spread abroad the word of God, the glad news of salvation. Some are prone to look for extraordinary signs in the heavens and in the earth,—extraordinary manifestations of divine power resistlessly bringing in the nations. But this never has been, and I believe never will be the mode of divine operations. It does not accord with the great order ordained in the universe. God has already revealed the power which is to convert the nations—this power lies in and accompanies the Gospel. No less surely has he revealed the agency required, and that is the agency of devoted men.

In the progression of divine providence, in the onward developments of art, science and civilization, we have arrived at a period most favorable for the accomplishment of the great work so long delayed. The most distant nations are accessible. Communication between nations once unknown to each other has become easy and rapid. The cheapness and rapidity with which books can be multiplied are unexampled. The most civilized and nominally christian nations rule the earth. The Bible is already translated into the most important languages of the world. The way is already prepared—the achievement is evidently within our grasp—the evangelization of the world is not a dream—it need be no longer delayed. O if we would but believe that it is for this we live, and for this alone—namely, the work of the Lord; that our being is worthless and without dignity but for this—namely, that we are God's servants; then would we arouse and do his bidding, and be no longer the poor fools of time.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 6. Vol. XV.) JUNE, 1841. (Whole No. 174.

SERMON CCCI.

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THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS.

"*The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*" Acts, 11 : 26.

About eighteen hundred years ago, there arose in Judea a certain sect, or religious community, the members of which were at first called by various names. Their founder was Jesus of Nazareth, whom they denominated the Christ, or the Anointed of God, and in whom they trusted as the Saviour foretold by prophets through a long course of ages. They called themselves "brethren," "disciples," "believers," and sometimes "saints," or holy persons. Among the Jews they were known by many appellations of contempt; they were called "Galileans," "Nazarenes," and whatever else could help to turn against them vulgar prejudice and passion. The sect, though every where spoken against, made rapid progress among the Jews; and some ten or twelve years after the death of its Founder, Gentiles began to be numbered among its converts, and flourishing assemblies of believers were soon formed in many of the great cities of the Roman empire.

Among the earliest and most important of these societies, or churches, was the one formed at Antioch. That city was the metropolis of Syria, and of all the east. It was a city of great

wealth and splendor, inferior only to Rome and Alexandria; renowned through the world, not only for the natural beauty of its situation, and the magnificence with which art had adorned it, and the genius and learning which centred there, but also for its luxury and Syrian profligacy. In its groves and temples the idols of Greece and Egypt, as well as the Astarte and Thammuz of ancient Syrian worship, were adorned with the fanatic zeal of oriental devotion. There, amid the shrines of that idolatry, the new faith gained footing among the Greeks by the efforts of a few disciples whom the storm of persecution had driven forth from Jerusalem and Judea. Thither the church of Jerusalem, as soon as they were informed of the opening thus made, sent Barnabas to carry on the work. There Barnabas, having secured the co-operation of the young Saul of Tarsus, then not long since converted to that faith, labored with great success, gathering and teaching the first church that ever was gathered from among the Gentiles. And there it was that a new name was given to the new sect, a name first spoken, probably, in ignorance, and scorn, and hate—there the disciples were first called Christians.

It seems probable, I say, that this name was first applied to the new sect by its enemies. There are only two instances beside the text in which the New Testament records the name. In the text, you observe, it is not spoken of as a name which the disciples selected and adopted for themselves, but only as a name which came into use. In another instance, king Agrippa, moved by the fervent appeal of the prisoner on whom he was sitting in judgment, is represented as exclaiming, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!" In one instance, too, the Apostle Peter, writing to the disciples throughout Asia Minor, and forewarning them of the fiery trial which was soon to try them, while he says, "Let none of you suffer as an evil doer," adds, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye."

But though this name was first given as a name of reproach, to designate the followers of one who had died a death of ignominy, the disciples, determined as they were to know nothing but "Christ and him crucified," soon adopted it themselves, as a distinctive appellation both convenient and significant. The new religion, despised and persecuted, held on its way; ere long it

numbered among its converts nobles and philosophers, as well as myriads of those in lowlier conditions; and ultimately emperors enrolled themselves as its disciples. The name of Christian gradually became, in the view of the world, too dignified for contempt; afterwards it rose above the reach of persecution; and at last not only were the associations incidentally connected with it varied, but its whole meaning was materially changed. And where at this day—after all the reforms of the last three hundred years—has the word been carried back completely to its original signification?

I propose, therefore, to inquire a little into the original meaning of this word. What sort of people were they, who were called Christians first at Antioch? The answer can be given satisfactorily only from the Scriptures of the New Testament. If we look to any later documents, we may find the word already beginning to lose its primitive import. I answer then,

I. They to whom this title was originally applied were, in the language of the text, "*disciples.*" A disciple is a learner—a pupil under the direction of his teacher. The apostles and other constant attendants on Jesus Christ during his life-time, were called his disciples or pupils; they neither claimed nor desired any other title. That word described exactly the relation then subsisting between them and their Master, just as it described the relation between Gamaliel and those who sat at his feet to be instructed in the learning of the Jews. Jesus was literally their teacher: they were in his school; they were his humble, inquiring, believing pupils; they were learning that which the Divine Word had come from heaven to teach them; and they made that study a serious and stated employment. After their Master was taken from them, they themselves undertook—being guided by that "other Comforter," (*παράκλητος*, helper, teacher,) "even the Spirit of truth"—to communicate to others that of which they were still, in their own estimation and profession, learners. All whom they were able thus to add to their number, were, like themselves, *disciples*, intent on learning that of which Jesus, the Son of God, was the great teacher. The assembly, or church, at Antioch was strictly a company of fellow-disciples; their church was a school in which all were learners, a

school under the tuition of Barnabas, and Saul, and others as elder pupils, yet superintended and illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

This, then, was one common characteristic of those who were first called Christians; they were all learners—all disciples. None of them were too wise to learn, none too ignorant to be instructed. There were, indeed, "first principles" of the doctrine of Christ, which all were expected to know; but from these first principles all—not here and there a favored individual, but all—were expected to "go on toward perfection." There was no seal upon the book of knowledge; its bright pages were open to all. In that school there was no distinction, such as Greek philosophers and Jewish rabbies had recognized between the few to whom knowledge could be safely intrusted, and the many who were to be only sparingly instructed—no distinction between doctrines esoteric and secret for the wise, and doctrines exoteric for the vulgar—no despotism over unthinking souls built on the cruel dogma that ignorance is the mother of devotion. All in the school of Christ—not a select order, but the pupils generally—were "enriched by him in all utterance and in all knowledge," and the Spirit given to them was "the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him." The system of the men who were first called Christians, was a system, not of forms and ritual observances, nor of polity, but of instruction, of knowledge, of faith; it was "the word," "the glad tidings," "the light," "the truth as it is in Jesus;" its great ordinance was preaching, its great power was the power of instruction. The Christian was indeed a priest, of a royal priesthood; but it was to offer spiritual sacrifices. He was a citizen, but his citizenship (Phil. 3 : 20) was in heaven. He was a subject, but in a kingdom not of this world. His first character was that of a disciple, a believing learner, an inquirer after truth, not groping and feeling by himself, if haply he might find it, but taught from living oracles.

II. These men, as disciples, held *a certain system of religious doctrines peculiar to themselves*. Of course the limits of the present inquiry will not permit a particular and full enumeration of their doctrines. It is obvious, however, and can not easily be denied, that their doctrines were in fact such as distinguished

ɔm from both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews they regarded
leed as having received of old the oracles of God, who in time
ɜt spake to their fathers by the prophets; but at the same
ıe they regarded themselves as having received from the same
ɔd some new and important communications of truth, by his
n. What truths these were has been strangely disputed. It
ɜ been supposed by some that the distinctive doctrines re-
ved by those who were first called Christians, are simply the
ity of God and the immortality of the soul. But were not
th of these truths as current among the Jews of that day as
ɔy now are among us? Did not the Jewish nation, excepting
ly the inconsiderable sect of the Sadducees, believe, as firmly
we do, the future existence of the human soul in a state of
ɹribution?' How then could these doctrines be the distinctive
ints of the system held by Christians? No; the apostles them-
ves, in their writings, give a palpably different account of this
ɹtter. Christ was not to them their master only, and the first
ɔmulgator of the faith which they had embraced; his person,
work, and his relations to the vast empire of God, were the
ɜat themes of that revelation of which they were the minis-
ɜ. Christ was the centre of their system—Christ the bright-
ɜs of the Father's glory, humbling himself for some great end,
ɹing upon himself the form of a servant, and found in fashion as
nan—Christ crucified, and dying for our offences—Christ ris-
; from the dead, and exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, to
at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and to give repent-
ɜe and the remission of sin—Christ the Judge of the world,
ɜ Lord, the Jehovah, who shall judge the living and the dead
his appearing. The doctrine of redemption and salvation by
ɹrist, of pardon and cleansing for sinners through his blood—
ɜ doctrine of the cross—was to them the Gospel, the glad tid-
ɡs to be published to all nations. Their own definition of their
ɔtrine was this, "to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling
ɜ world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them."
e confession of their faith was, "It is a faithful saying, and
ɹrthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to
ɾe sinners." In their instructions and inquiries they were
etermined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified"—
ɾhom God had set forth to be a propitation through faith in

his blood, to declare His righteousness that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." This doctrine was to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness; but they who were first called Christians gloried in it as the wisdom of God and the power of God to salvation.

I may be permitted here to throw out a thought which the time will not allow me to illustrate. What is Christianity? What does it undertake to reveal? Philosophy recognizes God as a first cause, the ultimate reason why things are; it speculates about the mode of God's existence, and the mode of created existence, and the mode of the dependence of created things on the first cause of all things; it wearies itself upon the problem of reconciling fate and the certainty of acts with the freedom of the agent; it argues about the will, whether it is self-determined or determined by causes external to the mind; but all these points are only remotely, if at all, connected with the doctrine embraced by those who were first called Christians. Such questions do indeed make a great figure in the theology of many modern Christians; but how remote is all this metaphysical jangling from the grand principles of the doctrine of Christ. To say of the Christian revelation, that it reveals God as the first cause of all things, and that it refers all things to his power as the primal ground of all existence and of all change;—still more, to affirm that instead of simply assuming, without any metaphysical explanation, this first element of natural theology, it is a revelation of the mode in which created things depend on the first cause,—is to turn the mind away from the whole scope and substance of the doctrine of the cross. No: Christianity is a revelation which respects primarily and chiefly the *moral* character, or what is the same thing, the moral *government* of God. To say that it reveals God's mercy, his placability, and the possibility of a reconciliation to him, is entirely an inadequate representation. It reveals God as holy, as just, as maintaining a moral government; and yet, in perfect consistency with the interests of that moral government, forgiving and saving the guilty. It reveals forgiveness for sinners, not as a thing of course, the universal law of the Divine administration, but as the result of a peculiar arrangement "into which angels desire to look." Innumerable intimations from nature, and from the course of God's dealings

with men here, the innumerable healing and recovering influences by which the sinner is surrounded in this life, afford a strong presumption that sinners in this world are under a dispensation of forgiveness. But the Christian revelation not only changes that presumption into a certainty, but makes known the consistency of that peculiar dispensation under which God has placed this world, with the vast government of law and authority which he maintains over all worlds; it reveals God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and at the same time it commands all men everywhere to repent, because God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Christ. The doctrine, then, embraced by those who were first called Christians, was new. Paganism had no image of it; philosophy had never conjectured it; the inspiration of the Old Testament had given only some prophetic shadows and faint glimmerings of that which was to come. The idea of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, just and yet justifying the sinner; the idea of a forgiving God, a redeeming God, and yet a God awful in the glory of his holiness, and swaying the universe of his intelligent creatures by the manifestation of his eternal and inflexible rectitude as moral governor; this is the grand and peculiar idea of the Christian revelation.

III. To those who were first called Christians, the religious doctrines which they had received were powerful springs of action, *marking their character with strong peculiarities*. The doctrines which they learned in the school of Christ, and concerning Christ, were not to them matters of mere speculation and discussion, held by them as a philosophic sect. If their own testimony may be received; if the manner of their exhibiting and treating these doctrines is to be at all considered, the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel were, to the believers who were first called Christians, powerful, sustaining, animating, controlling principles of action. "The love of Christ," they said, "constraineth us;" "he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to Him who died for them." "Whatsoever is born of God," they say, "overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our

faith." "By the cross of Christ," says one of them, "the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." Accordingly their testimony was, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." A striking proof of our position, that the character of these men was powerfully influenced by the doctrines which they embraced, is found in the fact that wherever the new religion found an entrance, there it occasioned much excitement. Every where the outcry was made, "The men that have turned the world upside down have come hither also." The converts to the new faith were hated, despised, and persecuted; they were deemed the filth and offscouring of all things. How could this have been if they had not been distinguished by great and manifest peculiarities of character?

IV. One of these peculiarities was an *extraordinary strictness and purity of conduct.* It was this, in the opinion of an apostle, which exposed them so much to the hatred of the world; "All they that will live GODLY in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." They considered themselves as called to be SAINTS; as "chosen of God" "before the foundation of the world, that they should be HOLY, and WITHOUT BLAME before him in love;" and as under the strongest bonds to exhibit accordingly a sanctification of the heart in a consistent sanctity of life. "The time past of our lives," says one of them, addressing himself to those who had obtained like precious faith, "may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banqueting, and abominable idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." To the greatest strictness, and as some would say, severity of manners, the teachers of these Christians uniformly exhorted them. Nothing was so sure to awaken the anxiety, and bring down the reproofs of their watchmen and guides, as any deviation in this respect. "Abstain from all appearance of evil." "Be not conformed to the world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation." "I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul."

This moral purity was one great end of the organization by which they were united. They had not only their assemblies to which all who where disposed to hear their doctrines and to be spectators of their public devotions had free access, but also some tie of association uniting those who recognized each other as disciples and followers of Christ. Linked together by this bond, they were brethren of the household of faith, bound to render to each other all the offices of enlightened brotherly affection, and particularly to help each other in their exposure to temptation, and in their progress towards moral perfection. They were members of a society in which each one was to contribute all in his power for the advancement of all the others in holiness of heart and life, considering one another, to provoke to love and good works, exhorting one another, looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness spring up to trouble them, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be among them any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of bread sold his birthright. And when they found such an one in their fellowship, they, his recognized brethren, his compeers, becoming convinced that he was a deceiver or an apostate, withdrew themselves from him, and by their action he was excluded from their hallowed association. It was the function of the brotherhood to "judge them that were within" the encircling pale of their fellowship, and it was theirs to "put away from among themselves that wicked person." And when the censure thus inflicted of many was followed by manifest repentance on the part of the offender, then, and not till then, it was theirs to forgive him, and to confirm their love towards him. Thus it was that those who were first called Christians were characterized by the strictest moral purity.

V. In connection with this, it may be observed that they were greatly *addicted to prayer, and other exercises of devotion.* They being followers of Jesus Christ, it could not well be otherwise with them. Nothing in his conduct was more striking than the frequency and earnestness of his communion with Him who heareth prayer. Accordingly, the first thing that we hear of the apostles and other disciples, after the ascension of Christ, is that they all continued in prayer and supplication. We find that the

election of a new apostle, their first measure, was attended with acts of devotion. We find them, on the morning of the pentecost, assembled with one accord in one place for devotional exercises. After that memorable day, we find that they and the three thousand who were added to them "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread," (devoutly remembering their Lord,) "and in prayer:" and that they were "daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, praising God." A few days afterwards, when Peter and John, having been brought before the council, were dismissed with many threatenings, we find them all lifting up their voice with one accord in joyful thanksgiving and earnest supplications for grace. We find conversion to their faith described by the expressive words, "Behold he prayeth." As we read the history of the acts of the apostles, and no less when we read the letters of those holy men, we find constant proof how much those who were first called Christians abounded in devotion, public and private, "praying always with all prayer," "praying without ceasing," and "not forsaking the assembling of themselves together" for united worship and mutual exhortation.

VI. Another characteristic of those who were first called Christians, was their practical and impartial *philanthrophy*. I do not use this word in the sense of mere alms-giving, or mere sympathy with human misery. There had already been in the world instances of generosity, of kindness, of public spirit, of admirable self-devotion to one's friends and country; but their philanthropy was a regard for man, not of one particular nation, or condition, or complexion, not as a Jew, not as a Roman, not as a Greek, not as sustaining any particular relation to themselves,—but as a man, as a brother of the hman family, as a partaker of human nature, in its dignity, in its degradation, in its guilt, in its redemption, in its immortality. Every human being was, to them, a partaker of that nature in which the Redeemer had lived, and died, and risen, and ascended to the right hand of God. They proclaimed indeed no war against the order of society; they breathed no fanatical zeal against the distinctions which courtesy recognizes; they quarreled not with the titles of rank and power, "most excellent" "most noble;" but to them, for all that, the emperor was a man,

and the slave was a man. The view which filled their minds and directed their human sympathies was, "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." There is no difference, "God will have all men to be saved." There is no difference, "Christ gave himself a ransom for all."

The strangeness, newness of their regard for human nature, demands our attention. Look then at one of the men who were first called Christians at Antioch. In his travels he has come to Athens, the seat of genius, of learning, of the arts, and proud above every other city of the earth in its ancestral glories. He has walked through its streets—he has looked with a troubled eye on its temples, its altars, its statues—he has discoursed in the synagogues where a few Israelites worship the one God—he has found in the forum opportunities of conference and discussion. And now he stands on one of those "immemorial hills"—all the glory of Athens in his sight. He stands before the famed and venerated court of Areopagus, surrounded with philosophers of every school, the Epicurean, the Peripatetic, those of the porch, and those of the academy, crowding to hear the babbler speak. He speaks of God —one God, the Creator and Ruler of all. He speaks of man; and how? "God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." How strange to an Athenian! One blood! All nations of one blood! We Greeks—Athenians—sprung from the soil—we of one blood with the Jew and the wild Scythian! What! the Ethiopian or Celtic slave that trembles in my presence, of one blood with me! Such is the scorn that speaks from many a countenance in that assembly.

Nor was such a philanthropy less strange to the Jew than to the Greek. The Israelite, indeed, acquainted with his own Scriptures, knew as a fact the original identity of the human race; but he was as far as the Athenian from recognizing the fact in his affections and his practice. And hardly any one thing in relation to the origin and first planting of Christianity is more marvelous, or more incapable of an infidel solution, than the fact that from among the Jews, abhorring all nations and abhorred of all, there came forth a sect in whose eyes, to whose philanthropy, all distinctions of nation, race and condition, were as nothing. It was by Jews that the doctrine was first preached, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoso-

ever believeth on him may not perish, but may have everlasting life." It was a Jew who first announced the conclusion to which he had slowly and reluctantly arrived in the face of the strongest national prejudices: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him."

Thus, among those who were first called Christians, it came to be a principle acknowledged and acted upon, that "in Christ is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." To them all men alike were men—immortal, responsible, guilty, redeemed; and all believers alike were the sons of God—kings and priests unto God—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. In the church, the Israelite, the Roman, and the Greek—the barbarian from Africa or from Britain, and the Scythian from Tartary,—the rich and the poor—the master and his slave, were brethren—all alike cared for each other and for the common interest—the whole "multitude" shared in the deliberations and proceedings which concerned their commonwealth, so humble to the eye of sense, and so august to the eye of faith. There was the school in which was first taught effectually that doctrine, the foundation of all true freedom, or what is the same thing, of all justice and good government among men—that doctrine which is yet to cast down all thrones and to break all fetters—the doctrine of the equality of all men as the rational and immortal offspring of God, as responsible to him, as the objects of his holy watchfulness and his kind regard, as partakers in the shame and ruin of a common apostacy from him, as redeemed by his Son, and as now passing through these scenes of probationary mercy to eternal life or eternal death.

VII. Another trait in the character of those who first bore the Christian name—of which it is indispensable to take some distinct notice—was their extraordinary *zeal and diligence for the propagation of their religion.* Every one of them had embarked in the gigantic enterprise of carrying the Gospel through the world. Every one of them felt that in receiving the Gospel, with its hopes and its renewing and ennobling influences, he had received it not for himself alone, but for others—a treasure not to be enjoyed in solitary contemplation, but to be communicated

and diffused, and still imparted till the world should rejoice in it. The church at Jerusalem, when first gathered, was pervaded by such zeal, there was among the members so much of self-denial and liberality in behalf of their new faith, that all they had was thrown by common consent into a common treasury. As many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices and laid them down at the apostle's feet. In other places there was not the same necessity which existed at Jerusalem; but the same spirit was found wherever there were Christians. Every where they were prompt to contribute for the common cause. The church at Antioch alone, when churches were feeble, and despised, and small, sent forth two missionaries to preach among the Gentiles. Wherever there was a call for aid, there aid was promptly rendered. The epistles of Paul are full of acknowledgments which prove the liberality of the disciples every where. Those who were first called Christians, held all their possessions in trust for Christ and for his Gospel, in the very spirit inculcated by Christ himself: "Whoever he be among you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple." They were not only ready to give, but ready to act, and ready to suffer for the Gospel. They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, nay, they freely surrendered their lives. Laboring in such a spirit, they saw the victories of the Gospel spreading far and wide. The host of believers was continually multiplied, and in a few years, without arms, without political influence, nay, in the face of the power and scorn of the world, in the face of fierce, malignant, fiery opposition from earth and from hell, the greatest revolution was accomplished which the world's history has ever yet recorded.

The subject shows us what men at the present day have the best title to the Christian name. I take it for granted that these characteristics which we find so clearly delineated in the Scriptures, are the proper traits of Christian character. I ask then, in the light of this subject, who are Christians?—who are the legitimate successors of the despised men to whom this name was first applied? Show us the men who are truly disciples,—who make it a business to sit at the feet of Jesus and to hear his words,—who study just what Jesus and his inspired apostles have taught, with the earnestness of eager and inquiring pupils.

Show us the men the centre of whose faith is the great and peculiar doctrine of God in Christ; God glorious in holiness, and yet justifying the sinner that believeth. Show us the men on whose hearts and lives this great doctrine and the doctrines to which it is necessarily related, have stamped a deep and clear impression, so that by the cross of Christ they are crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to them. Show us the men who are marked before the world, and disliked by the world for the strictness of their lives, because they undertake to live godly in Christ Jesus; over whom, whenever any of them fall or seem to fall into any moral delinquency, the world triumphs with malignant exultation. Show us the men who abound in prayer and praise, private, domestic, social—the men who forsake not the assembling of themselves together for devotion, but exhort one another while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Show us the men who, regarding all men as the offspring of God, the subjects of his moral government, the partakers in one ruin, and redeemed by one great expiation, practically regard the welfare and the rights of all men as of equal value. Show us the men whose lives are marked by an earnest and effective zeal for the salvation of men, and for spreading abroad the knowledge of that name by which alone we can be saved. These are the men that we look for. These are the legitimate successors to the name and honors, as they prove themselves to have inherited the spirit of those who were first called Christians. This is the true and only apostolic succession.

The occasion * requires us to address some distinct application of the subject to those who, by their own public and solemn covenant, are now about to be constituted a Church of Christ, and who are to maintain in this house the ordinances of the Gospel.

We trust, brethren, that your church is to be a society of disciples, a school organized according to the mind of Christ for the study and practice of his word. Those great truths, the knowledge of which first came by a miraculous communication from the mind of God, and by the power of which the believer is

*This sermon was delivered at the formation of the Church in the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, on the third of September, 1840.

transformed into the likeness of God, are here, we trust, to be continually expounded and proclaimed. Here is to be maintained, we trust, the purity, the strictness, the holy, heavenly severity of Christian character. The selfish, the worldly, the sensual, the light-minded, the impenitent, are to be warned off from the communion of Christ's disciples; and if any such creep into the sacred circle, they are to be disowned and excluded. Here is to be your place for public prayer and communion in holy things,—where God the Father shall be worshiped in the name of his holy Son Jesus,—where sweet songs of praise shall go up to the Author of our redemption from sin,—where Jesus, the eternal Word incarnate, Jesus, the sorrowful, the betrayed, the crucified, the risen, the Almighty Saviour, shall be remembered in the broken bread and the red cup. Here too you are to feed and nourish for continual activity the spirit of a holy and universal philanthropy, and the spirit of a laborious and self-denying zeal for the progress of the Gospel. To all this you pledge yourselves by the solemnities of this evening. Let me then suggest some points of caution and of duty, by the observance of which you may be aided in the performance of your vows.

1. Cherish a lively sense of the paramount importance of the things which have been spoken of as the characteristics of those who were first called Christians. Discipleship in the school of Christ—the reception of the great truths taught by Christ and his apostles—the experience of the power of those truths upon the heart—the practical purity and sanctity of the Christian life—prayer without ceasing, and in the spirit of adoption and of communion with God—and *with* all these things, and as resulting from them all, a philanthropy like that of the good Samaritan, regarding every human being as a neighbor and a brother—and a zeal like that of the apostles, full of self-denial for the extension of the kingdom of God—these are the things to be cared for first and continually. Where these things are, there is living Christianity. Where these things are wanting, there is no Christianity. Where forms, formularies, measures, and matters of organization, are exalted above these things, there the spirit and life of Christianity are sacrificed to externals and circumstantials. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink,—not forms of faith, not forms of prayer—not measures and expedients

--not discipline and government—but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

2. In due subordination to the essential things of living Christianity, maintain the true spirit of Christian liberty; and, in order to this, maintain the liberty of the churches. The church is a school for learning the will of Christ; and where the church is, the gathering together of Christ's humble pupils in his name, there he is with his Spirit to teach them. Where the church is, asking counsel of God with prayer, looking humbly for the truth, and refusing to obey any authority but that of the God of truth, —there is liberty, and there a pledge for the world's emancipation. I charge you then, that you call no man master—let no human authority have dominion over your faith. Yield to no body of men, clerical or laic—to no society, of whatever name or character—to no convention, though it be called the world's convention—to no assembly, though it seem like the "General Assembly and Church of the the First-born"—yield to no human authority that allegiance which is due only to Christ. Let none command your faith or your obedience, but by showing you the mind of God.

3. Remember that as individuals, and as a church, you bear the name of Christ. You are called Christians. Walk—help each other to walk—worthy of that high and holy calling. There is no name of a party or a sect which is of any moment in comparison with the name of Christ. To honor the name by which any particular church or confederation of churches is distinguished from others, is a small matter. To honor the name of Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, and the Redeemer of our souls, is the great thing. If you fail to maintain the purity and spiritual prosperity of your church, the grief, the shame will be, not that the name of Congregationalism is dishonored—not that the name of the Puritan New England Churches is dishonored—not that the hallowed and cherished memory of our pilgrim ancestors is dishonored—but that the name of Christ is dishonored. Shall that name which is above every name,—the name before which every knee should bow, and every tongue break forth in praise—shall it be dishonored on your account? Never forget that the name which you bear is the name of Christ.

One word, in conclusion, addressed to each and all. Are you a Christian, in the true and primitive meaning of that word? Those primitive Christians were in the right; and if you are like them in these essential characteristics, you are in the right. They were safe—with the world in arms against them—with fire and the sword of persecution flashing in their faces, they were safe; and if you are like them you are safe. They have attained, and are now enjoying, an inheritance in comparison with which the diadem of the Cæsars was a bauble; and if you are like them, that inheritance will soon be yours.

SERMON CCCII.

BY REV. LEONARD BACON,

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WHAT IT IS TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN.

"*And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*"—Acts, 16: 31–34.

Here is the description of a change which took place in a man, who, a few moments before, was at the point of committing suicide; his drawn sword in his hand to pierce his own vitals, that thus—not fearing the wrath of the eternal Judge—he might flee from the vengeance of an earthly despot to whom he was under a military accountability. Through God's mercy his mad intention was defeated. Thus rebuked, he listened trembling to the words of life, and immediately he believed. In the ordinance of baptism, he professed his faith and was recognized as a believer. Thence forth he was, in the common phrase of the apostles and primitive believers, "in Christ." That is to say, he was a Christian, in the true and spiritual meaning of that word.

What was the change through which that man then passed? To this inquiry the present discourse is devoted. What is it to become a Christian? What is that change in the mind and character, which takes place at the commencement of a Christian life? We consider the change simply as an event in the history of the man, a phenomenon occurring in his mental experience, and the question is, What is it?

This question I would consider in the simplest manner possible. Without inquiring what distinctions sectarian or partisan theologians have made, distinctions which may be of value in their proper place, I would look directly into the Scriptures, and see what they teach. What is it to become a Christian?

We may pursue the inquiry before us by two distinct processes, both of which are simple, intelligible, and entirely Scriptural. The question, What is it to become a Christian? may be answered with perfect propriety, by showing from the Scriptures what it is to *be* a Christian; for to become a Christian is simply to *begin to be* such an one as the Scriptures teach us to call by that high and holy name. Or the same question may be answered by exhibiting the more direct testimony of the Scriptures, and carefully comparing the various words and phrases which are used by the sacred writers for the express purpose of describing that change, the commencement of a Christian life. Both these methods will be employed in the present discourse.

I. We may learn what is the change which takes place when a man becomes a Christian, by inquiring from the Scriptures what it is to be a Christian.

And here—in order to prevent and obviate some vague objections in this process, which may, perhaps, arise in such minds as are accustomed to other methods more scholastic and metaphysical—let it be remarked, that we understand what any particular change *is*, just when we fully know the phenomena of the changes, or, in plainer words, the facts in which it consists. The change is one thing, the power by which it was wrought is another thing, and its connection with a thousand other events is another thing. The change is an event—a plain matter of fact, and may be altogether understood, even while its causes and its connections are very imperfectly apprehended, and are matters of speculation and inquiry. There lies before you a mass of ice. As you stand in the sunshine, and with the south wind breathing softly upon you, you see the mass dissolved. Here is a change. That which existed in one form exists in another form. That which was a solid is now a fluid. This fact is all the change, and the more perfectly you understand this fact, the more perfectly you understand the change. You may examine and analyse the fact—you may learn more minutely the properties of the solid, and the properties of

the fluid—you may observe the solid down to the instant when its properties as a solid ceased to exist, and the fluid at the very instant at which it begins to flow—and after all, the change of the substance from a solid to a fluid consists in the simple fact that it *was* the one, and *is* the other. This the child knows, who sees the change, and more than this the philosopher can not know. The only difference between the child and the philosopher, on this point, is that the latter knows better than the former what is a solid and what is a fluid. You may ask many questions about the change—you may inquire by what power and instrumentality it was effected—you may trace its connection with innumerable other events and operations, with the rising of the fountains and the swelling of the torrents, with the coming on of longer days, and brighter sunshine, and warmer breezes, with the shooting forth of vegetation, with the revolution of the earth on its orbit. You may look for the class of changes to which this particular act most properly belongs, and for the law of universal nature under which it has occurred. You may consider how it stands related to the power, the wisdom, and the benignity of the great Author of creation and of providence. But all these inquiries into the relations and connections of the change, are entirely distinct from the question, what is the change; and, indeed, they all presuppose, in the inquirer, a knowledge of the proper answer to that question; for how can any man intelligently look for the relations and bearings of an event, which event is to him unknown?

So in respect to the particular subject before us—the change which takes place when a man becomes a Christian. We speak now of the nature of the change, and of that simply. We are not to inquire at all into the power and influence by which it is effected or into any of its connections with the purposes of God, or with the scheme of his moral government. The question about the change is not, How is it? or, Why is it? but simply, What is it? The answer is, in general terms, the man who was not a Christian begins to be a Christian. This fact is the change, and if we understand this fact clearly—that is, if we understand clearly what it is *not* to be a Christian, and what it is to *be* one—then we understand the change precisely. Tell me from the Scriptures what is a Christian—tell me how far and in what respects the Christian differs from other men, and you have told me just what change has taken place in that man, you have told me how far and in what respects he differs from his former self.

To this part of the inquiry, therefore, we now turn. What is it, according to the Scriptures, to be a Christian?

1. A Christian is one who believes the Gospel. "He that believeth shall be saved." "We walk by faith and not by sight." "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is un-

necessary to repeat the quotations which might be made on this point. They all amount to this,—he who is truly a Christian, is one who takes the Christian religion as his rule of life, and who acts habitually with a thoughtful regard to all the disclosures of the word of God. This is one of the first and most striking peculiarities of the Christian as such, and this is no small part of the change which took place when he became a Christian. In that hour he ceased to treat the oracles of God with that neglect and practical rejection with which he had always treated them before, and began to look at the things which are not seen, and to act on the principle, that all the word of God is unerring and momentous truth.

2. A Christian is a disciple and follower of Christ. How often the word disciple is used in the New Testament as the distinctive appellation of Christians—how often Christians are spoken of as believing on Christ, owning him as their master and teacher, and following his example—I need not show. What is it then to be a disciple and follower of Christ? It is obviously to adopt his principles; to receive all his declarations and doctrines as truth, and as truth of infinite importance; to imbibe his spirit and tread in his steps, and to be devoted with the zeal of a partisan to his honor and the advancement of his cause. This then is the characteristic of the Christian. This is one point wherein he differs from other men and from his former self; and this is one point of the change which took place in him when he began to be a Christian. At this crisis he began to be a disciple and follower of Christ.

3. A Christian is a penitent sinner. To him, and to none other, belong the blessings pronounced by Jesus on the poor in spirit, and on those that mourn. In what terms does Paul speak of himself as "less than the least of all saints,"—as having been "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious;" and with how much meaning does he testify, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." I need not spend time to argue, that this is the characteristic spirit of a Christian. This is the poverty of spirit, the mourning, the meekness, which Christ pronounces blessed. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Those, therefore, whom he calls and calls effectually —those who are his—are all penitent sinners like Paul. The Christian is one who acknowledges himself a sinner—one who does not profess, or think to stand before God in any other light than that of a rebel surrendering himself, and trusting only to the mercy of his sovereign. He is one who thinks very meanly of himself on account of his sins, and who takes a pleasure in humbling himself before God. He is one who strives habitually against sin as against a deadly and horrible evil, and whose ambition and earnest purpose is to escape the pollution that is in

the world through lust. This is one particular which distinguishes him from what other men are, and from what he himself once was. This, then, is one particular of the change which took place when he became a Christian. Then first, he heartily owned himself a sinner before God. Then first, he gave up his efforts to excuse and hide his guilt. Then first in all his life-time, yielding to the convictions of his conscience, he said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord. Then first, he renounced his perverse and rebellious disposition, and began to long and strive in earnest to be purified from sin.

4. A Christian is one who depends on the atonement and intercession of Christ for pardon and final salvation. He receives it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners. He is always ready to say with the holy Stephen, Lord Jesus receive my spirit. He has committed his all to that Saviour, and he knows that such a Saviour is able to keep that which he has committed unto him. This trait of character—this giving the soul to Christ for present reconciliation to God, and for final salvation—this living on Christ, in his office as Redeemer and advocate, is peculiar to the Christian; and when first he thus entrusted himself to the power and mercy of the Saviour, at that precise juncture he began to be a Christian, and that was the change.

5. A Christian is one who freely yields himself to be governed and led, taught and sanctified, by the Spirit of God. The ungodly "do always resist the Holy Ghost;" while, on the contrary, "those who are in Christ Jesus," "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The men of one sort mind the things of the flesh, the others mind the things of the Spirit. "If ye through the Spirit," says Paul to the Romans, "do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live; for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God." "Walk in the Spirit," says the same apostle to the Galatians, "and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." "They that are Christ's," he subjoins, "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." A great point then, in the change by which the Christian became what he now is—a great point in the difference between what he is and what he was—is this: once he walked after the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; but in the hour in which he became a Christian, in that hour he began to walk after the Spirit—in that hour he gave over his resistance of the Holy Ghost, and yielded the citadel of his heart to be occupied and possessed by the Spirit of God and of Christ—in that hour he gave himself up to be led by the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, to be sanctified and sealed by the influences of the Spirit, and to be thenceforth the temple of the Holy Ghost.

But we have pursued this part of our inquiry as far as our lim-

its will allow, and far enough to give a definite and satisfactory answer to the question, What is the change which constitutes the commencement of the Christian life? Other particulars, and other aspects of Christian character, as distinguished from the common character of other men, might be presented; but the essential and comprehensive views have already been exhibited; and, as these views, to a great extent, obviously include each other, so, taken together, they include all the traits and features characteristic of such as shall be saved. Wherein, then, consists that change by which a man becomes a Christian? Why, it consists in this, that he begins to believe the word of God, and to treat all its declarations and disclosures as deserving his most serious and practical attention; and in this, that he gives himself to Christ as a disciple, and a devoted and active follower; and in this, that whereas he has heretofore been a perverse and persevering sinner, he now begins humbly to acknowledge his guilt, and to live as a penitent sinner, struggling against temptation and longing to be purified; and in this, that he casts himself upon God's mercy, and begins to build all his hopes of present forgiveness and final salvation on the great atonement and the powerful intercession of Christ; and in this, that having long resisted the Holy Ghost, he yields to that divine and blessed influence, and begins to walk after the Spirit. This is the change which constitutes a man a Christian. This is the change by which you must become a Christian, or else you must die in your sins.

II. It now remains to notice more rapidly, the various Scriptural expressions by which this same change is directly described.

1. The change is often called *believing* generally, or *receiving the Gospel*. Particular instances of this I need not adduce. But what does such an expression mean, as applied to denote this change? It means that when the man yields his heart to the reception and belief of the word of God—that is when he begins to believe —then he becomes a Christian.

2. The change is often called *coming to Christ*, as in this declaration of the Saviour, "All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" or in this, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." This expression manifestly means, coming to Christ as a teacher, and Saviour, and Lord,—that is, beginning to be his disciple and follower. And this, if there is any meaning in the words of the Saviour just cited—this coming to Christ, is that change which ensures to the sinner the blessings of salvation, and without which no man can see life.

3. The change is frequently called *repentance;* as where it is said, "God also hath granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life;" or, as in the exhortation, "Repent and be baptized for the

remission of your sins." The word thus used, obviously implies that the sinner begins to be a Christian by beginning to be penitent.

4. Sometimes the change is called *conversion or turning*, that is, the turning of the sinner to God. Thus God says by his prophet, "Turn ye, for why will ye die?" and by the apostle, using a word of the self-same significancy, "Be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Now what is this turning to God, for the remission of sins, and for deliverance from death? To whom does the sinner turn, when by his turning he finds forgiveness and becomes an heir of life? To whom but God in Christ? To whom but to that God who so loved the world that he sent his Son, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him may be saved? What then is this conversion, this turning to God, but the abandonment of self-righteousness and self-will, and self-seeking, and the surrender of the soul to God's method of salvation? What is it but the casting of the soul, in contrition, in humility, in self-consecration, in ardent desires after holiness, upon Jesus Christ as an Almighty Saviour?

5. Not unfrequently the change is called by such figurative titles as regeneration or *being born again*, becoming a new creature, being renewed, passing from death to life; and especially in view of that interposition of Divine mercy, and those influences of the Holy Spirit by which it is accomplished, and of which it is not our purpose here to speak; it is called a being born of God, or a being born of the Spirit. These strong expressions are all employed to describe the greatness and comprehensiveness of the change. Nor are they—nor can they be—too strong for the purpose. What change can be greater than that in which a man comes for the first time and for ever under the controlling power of things invisible and eternal—that in which he joins himself to the standard and cause of Christ as the Captain of his salvation —that in which he begins to repent of his sins against God, and turns to a new obedience—that in which he learns to hope for forgiveness and salvation through the blood of God's own Son—that in which he sweetly, joyfully, and for ever yields himself to be led, governed and sanctified by the indwelling Spirit of God? What change can be greater than this? It introduces him to a state of reconciliation and friendship with the King Eternal. It makes him a fellow-servant with angels; an heir of heaven; a child of God; beloved by Him before whom angels, awe-struck, veil their faces; guarded and guided by that power which sways the universe; and holding constant intercourse with the Father of Spirits, the King immortal and invisible. All this is included in that change which takes place when the man, minding the things of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, dead in trespasses and sins, condemned already, and mark-

ed as an heir of wrath, becomes a Christian. Is it not a new birth —a new era of life—the dawning of a new existence? Is it not worthy to be called a new creation? is not he a new creature with whom old things have thus passed away and all things have become new? Is it not life from the dead—is it not a passing from death to life—when he whom hell was yawning to devour, is plucked from its opening gate and made an heir of glory?—when he who was in the condemnation, in the helplessness, in the pollution, and corruption, and loathesomeness of moral death, stands up revived, purified, renewed, to rejoice in the light and to move and act in the godlike liberty of the sons of God?

This now is the change to which you are called. This is that change to which the God of grace has so long been striving to bring you. To this change, as that without which you are eternally a lost, and wicked, and ruined spirit,—all the disclosures of God's word, all the dealings of his Providence, all the kind monitions and pleadings of his Spirit, are continually pointing you. You know substantially what this change is. I repeat it—I affirm it earnestly—I know your conscience affirms it also—you understand essentially the nature of this change. And if you say that you know not what you are to do, or what you can do, to be saved, you deny your own convictions.

You see it is a reasonable change. Its reasonableness is self-testified. You feel upon your conscience the self-evident reasonableness of your passing through that change, through which the Philippian jailor passed in that hour in which he believed. Such a change is as reasonable as it is for the rebel to return to his allegiance; as reasonable as it is that truth should be obeyed, that purity, and virtue, and holiness should be loved; that beneficence should be admired and imitated; or that love, bleeding and dying for you, should provoke your grateful self-consecrating love in return.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 7. Vol. XV.) JULY, 1841. (Whole No. 175.

SERMON CCCIII.

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GOD EXALTED IN THE DISCIPLINE OF NATIONS.

A Sermon delivered on the 14th day of May, 1841;

BEING THE DAY OF THE NATIONAL FAST
Recommended by the President of the United States.

"*The lofty looks of a man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted on that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan. And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.*—Isaiah, 2: 11—17.

How often in the annals of the ancient church did Jehovah announce himself a jealous God! He declared that he would share his honors with no rival power, whether it were the deity of a depraved fancy or the occupant of an earthly throne. Any approach to idolatry he viewed as casting contempt on his infinite majesty. He alone must be exalted by his creatures as the object of their supreme homage.

It was in view of this high claim, and of its practical disregard by the Israelites, who had become the imitators of proud and idolatrous nations, that Isaiah was directed to utter that prophetic vindication of the Divine honor which constitutes the text, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be ex-

alted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up: and he shall be brought low; and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan. And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

From the general tenor of this prediction, its application was evidently not intended to be confined to the Jewish nation. It seems to convey the idea of a comprehensive vindication of insulted deity, to take place among all nations whose arrogance or whose idolatry had reached the limit of the Divine forbearance. It is an extended commentary on the declaration that "no flesh should glory in his presence." It announces God's determination to stain the pride of human glory—to reduce men and nations to their appropriate sphere; and to bring the whole world to a practical acknowledgment of the Divine supremacy. Such a result the Almighty had in view from the earliest date of individual and national existence. It has been ACCOMPLISHED to some extent in different ages of the world; but the acknowledgment has been of short duration, and the memory of the Divine judgments has seldom been retained for more than a single generation.

In the primeval state, God alone was exalted, and the moral order of this lower universe was undisturbed. Pride, however, soon took the place of humility. From that moment the haughtiness of man was placed in opposition to the supremacy of God. The moral order of the universe experienced then a second disturbance. Man wished to be as God. He rushed out of his appropriate sphere. It was necessary for Jehovah to place a restraint upon this new rebellion—to vindicate his own dignity, and to impress upon the culprit a sense of wrong. Accordingly we find an immediate and melancholy change in the character and the circumstances of our race. A tremendous and prolonged retribution is inflicted. When this retributive day of the Lord was upon Eden and its inhabitants, we may suppose that humility again succeeded to pride—that the haughtiness of man was brought low, and that for a brief season the Lord alone was exalted.

From this date we contemplate the human race under a new aspect, *which we shall designate as the era of experimental depravity.*

It had been seen what human nature was in its state of innocence—how weak to resist temptation—how ready to yield at the first onset of hell. It was now to be demonstrated what that nature, fallen under the dominion of sin, was capable of perpe-

trating, if left to its unrestrained selfishness and ferocity. How soon, therefore, did a heaven-daring arrogance break forth! We take but one step and we reach a murderer, who first insults his God, and then determines to obliterate the only resemblance of him to be found in the second generation of mankind. Did insulted justice look calmly on? The scathed oak bears not more evident traces of the thunderbolt, than did the forehead of Cain the mark of heaven's retribution. That signature of wrath, however, was not transmitted. The next generation inherited the pride but not the physical punishment of Cain. Driven out from the presence of the Lord—from the precincts of his gracious covenant—they began to build great cities, and to set God at defiance. They gloried in their gigantic strength. They boasted of their Cyclopean towers. They strode the earth clad in their armour of brass and iron. They usurped the prerogative of heaven, grasping the sword of vengeance, and filling the earth with violence and blood. "They set their face against the heavens, and said, who is Lord over us?" The time at length arrived when this haughtiness of men was to be brought low. Ordinary discipline would not now avail. The vindication must be on a scale commensurate with the wickedness. Hence the solemn declaration, "the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them, and behold I will destroy them with the earth." Thus ended the first era, viz., that of experimental and unrestrained depravity.

Mankind now entered on the second great era, which may be included in the space between the deluge and the coming of Christ, AN ERA OF RESTRAINTS *both physical and moral.*

Let us see how human nature conducts itself under a change of circumstances. The period of human life was rapidly diminished; and miraculous interpositions of heaven were not infrequent. How soon, however, the awful catastrophe just alluded to lost its influence on the general conscience, may be seen in the fact, that scarcely had the survivors emerged from the ark when they proposed to frustrate the councils of God by building a tower whose top should reach to heaven. They intended thereby to make to themselves a name in the earth. The pride and haughtiness of human nature was thus strongly developed. Here again it was necessary for God to interpose. These oaks of Bashan were accordingly scattered, and that vast monument of human arrogance and ambition never reached its intended elevation.

Broken up and separated by diversity of language, each division of the race took up its line of march in search of countries and climates suited to its taste. Impressive as had been the Divine dispensations toward them, none seem to have carried along with them the fear of the great Jehovah. The lingering

traces of the true religion served only as a basis for the erection of a vast system of idolatry. By the calling of Abraham, the Almighty saved out of this general moral wreck a fragment of the ancient faith, and thus perpetuated the existence of vital godliness. Great nations now begin to appear. Human pride and ambition are written on their escutcheons. Their walls of defence—their temples of idolatry—their war chariots—the very names and titles of their monarchs, all indicate the same heaven-daring arrogance. When they had reached a height which they considered inaccessible, and had attained a strength which they deemed impregnable—that is, when human ambition could scarcely go higher, aud human pride had no object of envy left but the very throne of God—and when, as in the case of Babylon, even that throne was menaced, did the Almighty write out a solemn edict for their destruction. It was proclaimed by prophets, not as a means of repentance—their day of grace had gone by—but as a judicial testimony against their pride and haughtiness. God saw himself dethroned, whilst the impersonations of Baal and Astaroth, of Isis and Osiris, were installed amid the gorgeous architecture of Egypt and of Babylon. The general course of a vindicatory Providence, however, lay in the natural operation of that very depravity which Jehovah designed to punish. He deviated, in some cases, from this order, and effected by miracle what he ordinarily brought about by the slower but not less sure influence of moral and physical causes. One of these exceptions was when his enslaved people were released from Egyptian tyranny. In such cases we cannot fail to see in the peculiar circumstances a reason for such deviation. But whether by miracle, or by the less impressive agency of natural causes, it was equally the outstretched arm of an incensed but holy God, asserting his high moral prerogative and vindicating his insulted majesty. Hence he would dash one nation against another; and when the victor stood in triumph over the ruin of his proud competitor, he would give this victor to be crushed in turn by some succeeding conqueror. Or, as was not unusual, he would extinguish the warrior in the voluptuary, and consume by sensuality what had not been conquered by power.

In various ways, by the operation of human depravity, the pomp and glory of mighty kingdoms were brought to the dust. Without the prophecies in our hands, we should be very likely to overlook the agency of heaven, and to attribute the changes of empire to a blind fatality, instead of referring them to that Almighty Power which has not only linked together causes and results, but which renders that very connection, in many cases, the retributive minister of his vengeance. Examples of this, familiar to your own minds, might be adduced; and, did time permit, it would be an instructive lesson to trace out the con-

nection between the pomp and pride of ancient nations and their downfall, according to express prediction. Every person acquainted with his Bible, who has compared its prophecies with their fulfilment in the facts which profane history has collected, will be at no loss for illustrations of the point before us. This rise and decline of empires has been going on since the first city was founded east of Eden. The causes lie deep in the character of man and in the designs of an overruling Providence. Certain it is, that, but for the upholding hand of God, there exist in every organized state or community elements of ruin of sufficient potency to ensure its speedy extinction. Human depravity in its various developments is sufficient to uproot the deepest foundations of empire. Even where the true religion exists, and exerts a restraining influence; yet if the influence be partial and not pervading, the state will in that case be proportionably exposed to premature ruin.

The philosophy of history consists not, as I apprehend, in gathering from the experience of the past *political* maxims simply, but in deducing moral instruction from providential dispensations. To the character of the historian and the politician we must add that of the moralist and the christian. We must take a LOFTY station as our post of observation. We must go high enough to look through the vista of years, and trace the meanderings of that stream which had its rise in Eden, and which is to disembogue at last in the great ocean of eternity. We must keep in view the ever-present and all-pervading providence of God. The grand end and design of our creation must not be lost sight of. We forget an important item, if we forget that man has a higher destiny than the present life, or when we overlook the sublime fact that this life is but the vestibule of human existence.

We have marked off the age of the world into grand divisions. The first, we have said, terminates with the flood. *That* we have called the age of *experimental depravity*. All restraints were then withdrawn. "The thoughts of the imagination of men's hearts were evil, and *only* evil, and that continually." They were left to act out this gigantic power of evil within. Longevity furnished the occasion for awful excesses of depravity. The earth was literally saturated with crimes. This age ended with the general destruction of the human race. By a most fearful judgment, the haughtiness of man was brought low, and God was exalted amid the terrors of his justice. This was the awful experiment of human depravity unrestrained.

The second age terminates at the advent of Christ. This was the age of partial restraint by providential interference, and by an increase of moral light. Men lived but a few years; so that their depravity, if excessive, was soon ended. In Judea—the centre of the civilized world—a light was kept burning for two

thousand years, which radiated in every direction, scattering a few feeble rays in remotest kingdoms. This light shone with more or less vividness on the altars of religion until the great Light of the World arose upon mankind. Nothing surely but a special providence, imparting and sustaining religion, could have saved the Jewish nation from extinction. By her side, perished Egypt, Babylon, Tyre and Nineveh. Wanting true religion—the only conservative influence of nations—those mighty collateral empires rose, culminated, and descended into oblivion. The Almighty gave mankind a chance, so to speak, for the development of social improvement and of political aggrandizement. He allowed them full latitude in the erection of great cities and strong fortresses. He gave them Nebuchadnezzars, Pharaohs, and Solons; whose enterprise and wisdom were exerted to the utmost to lay enduring foundations under the rising fabric of empire. He furnished ample scope for the human faculties, in the researches of philosophy and in the maxims of uninspired wisdom. But, alas, all could not give security to empire. The very license to do and to devise, to build and to beautify, became the occasion of their ruin. Men gloried in their strength—gloried in their fortitude—in their power—in the durability of their works. They asked not even for the arm of Omnipotence to lean upon. They were disposed to inscribe *Eternity* on the pillars of their temples and on the pillars of the state. They had lofty looks and a proud heart. They said, in the spirit of the king of Babylon, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." From this proud pre-eminence, how did these empires, in funeral train, descend into the tomb! The wing of time had scarcely made one sweep in its progress, ere an impressive desolation reigned over these haughty monarchies. What shall we write as their epitaph? "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the grass." What human strength could do was done. What human wisdom could achieve was achieved. Mind and muscle did their utmost. Human genius allied itself to human strength, and dared, in its mighty creations, to fight against destiny. But all would not do. Man without God, and without an acknowledgment of God, what is he? He cannot contend successfully with time. The dust of oblivion must settle upon his noblest works; and if, in past ages, HE would not learn humility, his successors *should* over his undecyphered tomb.

When this second experiment had been fully made; when the pride of man lay mortified in the rubbish of a hundred empires, God appeared upon the stage in a new and third development of his moral government.

The advent of Christ was the grand era in human existence. Nothing that went before—nothing that shall come after, can be compared with this. Indeed all that shall come after, is but the

prolongation of this glorious epoch. It took place when, after the first era, human depravity unrestrained had deluged the earth with crimes and blood; and after the second era, when human nature, under favorable circumstances, had another trial of self-government and had failed—when pride, in both cases, had gone before destruction, and the haughty spirit before a fall; it was at this juncture that a new dispensation was ushered in, intended to show, that whilst men and nations without God, become proud and hasten to extinction; *with* God, and by the grace of God, they may achieve triumphs without pride, and may earn and insure immortality without self-idolatry. From this date onward a new face entirely is given to the moral aspects of the world. This religion is designed to have an all-controlling sway over men and over masses of men—over individual and national character. To existing nations not embracing or obstinately rejecting christianity a certain period of probation will no doubt be given. But the Almighty will vindicate its claims, as the last grand experiment on fallen humanity.

As yet we can scarcely be said to have had a perfect model of a christian nation. I do not regard the Roman state under Constantine as such. There was too much pride and paganism there. It was christianity with its incipient corruptions, rendered still more corrupt by a partial amalgamation with paganism. The pomp and pageantry of that ambitious emperor ill-assorted with the humility and simplicity of the real cross. A state religion, I apprehend, can never be otherwise; certainly not whilst the power of human depravity is as strong as it now is. I would make a difference between a state religion and religion acknowledged by and influencing the state. To God, under all circumstances, must be rendered the things of God, whilst Cæsar, in all his principles and doings, must humbly defer to Him who is "the King of kings and the Lord of lords." Politics must have the sanction of religion, or they have no substantial basis, and can have no virtuous efficiency.

The error with Constantine consisted in an effort to strengthen religion by an appeal to human pride. The very thing with which christianity is at war was forced, as an unnatural ally, into her service. Hence the splendid cathedrals—the showy ritual—the gorgeous vestments of the priesthood. How in contrast was all this with the meek and lowly Jesus! This savoured of the lofty looks and pride of man. No wonder, then, that the church became more corrupt and the state more insecure. A proud hierarchy grew up under the wing of the empire; and overshadowing the empire itself, aimed at length at universal dominion. The secular and the spiritual power became united in one sceptre, and under this twofold despotism the human soul for ages forgot the very sentiment of liberty. This hierarchy claims the venera-

ble name and the exclusive privileges of christianity, pretending that power is hers alone "to bind and to loose," and coolly turns over to damnation all who are without her jurisdiction. Who could have supposed, standing on some fête-day in the porch of St. Peter's, and viewing the regal priesthood as it defiles in splendor under its lofty dome, that all this originated in the lowly circumstances of Jesus and his impoverished disciples? Fearful are the prophecies which foreshadow the doom of this presumptuous system of baptized idolatry. "For the day of the Lord shall be upon her hills that are lifted up; and upon her *high towers*, and upon her fenced walls, and upon all her pleasant *pictures*, and the haughtiness of her power shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Yet must it not be forgotten, that even amidst her appalling wickedness there remained secreted in her cloisters enough of the christian religion to operate as a conservative influence amid the general wreck of nations. The smothered spark of existence was there. Christianity, bound and fettered, heard at length the voice of her deliverer; and when at the era of the Reformation she came forth, her beauty was undimmed and her power undiminished.

I regard the long night of papal despotism as another experiment, if not the very last, of human weakness in contrast with the simple grace of God. Men were left to mix up religion with the pride of power—to use it as an iron sceptre over the trembling conscience—to wrest it out of its legitimate sphere, making it the lever of ghostly authority, instead of the regenerator of the human soul. That experiment—so awful in its consequences—is, we have reason to thank God, hastening to its close. Religion is now better understood. Her province is now conceded to be, a renewing influence on the heart and life. Instead of sealing up the word of God, she opens its page to the people as well as to the priesthood.

The religion of the Bible is hereafter to be emphatically the test of national endurance and of national prosperity.

Mohammedism is not only on the wane, but is hastening rapidly to its tomb. The followers of the false prophet, by inscribing the crescent on their war-standards, have symbolically "turned the moon into blood." Let them not be surprised to see the red symbol of their power *extinguished* in blood; for "HE," said Jesus, "who *taketh* the sword shall perish with the sword."

Papacy, by the voice of prophecy, must die. It is the very personification of lofty looks and arrogant pretensions. It "opposeth and exalteth itself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that as God, it sitteth in the temple of God, showing itself that it is God." Its doom is sealed, alike by the Bible and by the tendency of its own policy. The human mind

is too far emancipated to be quiescent under its imposed fetters. This Goliath of Gath has strode across the Atlantic, and is now defying the armies of Israel in this land of their inheritance. Let not the vauntings of the foe intimidate us. The word of God, like the simple weapon of the shepherd youth, shall smite him to the dust.

It seems to me that we have now arrived where the clouds have in some measure cleared off, and the moral scenery of the universe is well-defined. We occupy a post of observation, from whence we can survey, backward and forward, the vast movements of providence, and can deduce the clear intimations of the Divine will. We are on the third era of human existence, the most eventful of the whole, and we cannot be at a loss as to what the path of duty is. I have no hesitation, therefore, in declaring as my settled belief, *that any nation which does not connect itself with the true religion, as its conservative principle, is destined to a speedy extinction.*

This may be inferred from what has already been said. The historical argument is forcible. It is with nations as with individuals, without Christ and his religion they can do nothing, that is, they cannot prosper in a way to render the government enduring and the people happy. If history speaks any truth, it speaks this. Nor is it difficult to see that what history announces reason corroborates. It would be easy to show that human nature, without the influence of religion, is incapable of self-government. But on this discussion we cannot now enter. All that remains is to point out some dangers to which even protestant or christian nations are exposed.

I am no advocate for a union of church and state, but I am in favor of the union or intermixture of RELIGION with the state. Moral principle, having for its source the Bible, must lie at the basis of our government. Any other foundation—as for instance a selfish policy, otherwise termed expediency—is but a foundation of sand. I consider the proclamation, under which we this day convene, as a union of religion with the state; but every one must see there is no union of church and state. I look upon the daily religious services in the halls of Congress as a union of religion with the state. I consider the general respect paid by the government to the moral sense of the people, in the discontinuance of official duties on the Sabbath, as expressive of the same thing. So far as all this goes, it betokens good for the nation.

But it is noticeable that an extreme jealousy seems to have been entertained by many, in relation to the influence which religion and religious men might exert upon the government. The danger, in my opinion, lies on the other extreme. The tendency has been not to lean *too much* upon religion, but to refuse her help altoge-

ther. There being among us no church establishment, the tendency has been to discard even that moral strength of which the church is but the organized symbol. This *has* been and this *continues* to be our point of danger. Self-government is the pride and boast of Americans. Public sentiment—well or ill founded—is the deity WE are in danger of worshipping. "Free and independent"—the watchwords of the revolution—have been rung in our ears for half a century. See ye no tendency in all this to swing clear of our dependence even on the God of nations? We boast of what we have done, and we boast of what we *intend* to do. We glory in the past and we forestal a revenue of glory for the future. Is it not enough that we refuse to succumb to any or to all the powers of earth—must we declare off even from the Sovereign of the universe? Is it wise for a nation but little more than half a century old to treat with indifference the offered arm of Omnipotence? Is it wise, with the examples already cited before us, to rest on mere human wisdom, or on any theory of government, however perfect, which that wisdom has has originated? The tendency, I repeat, even with christian nations, is to rest in man—to glory in man—to set up the state as an idol—to talk of their statesmen as if they were gods, and of their power as if it were omnipotent, and of their resources as if they were exhaustless. What arrogant language do even *christian* nations adopt! Who is she that styles herself the mistress of the ocean? Proud and presumptuous nation! Her usurpation of heaven's prerogatives is not unregarded in the council-chamber of the Eternal. The time *may* come when this haughty diction shall be brought low. What are her floating batteries but feathers in the hands of God! How easily could that ocean—of which she styles herself and is styled the mistress—play in derision with her mighty armaments, and then swallow them up for ever! She *is* a christian nation, we admit; she has performed many noble achievements; but her lofty style savors of anything but of christian humility. Whatever part *she* may be destined to act in the great developments of the the third era, she is yet to be humbled ere that office can be meekly fulfilled. She must put herself upon her knees, or God may see fit to place her in that position by unlooked-for judgments.

Humility is as becoming to a nation as it is to an individual. Never since our country had an existence has she stood in a more sublime attitude than she this day assumes whilst doing homage to the God of nations. *She* has been hitherto a recreant child. She was nursed on the bosom of piety. She was rocked in the cradle of persecution. From first to last she has been the child of providence. Amid the storm of elements—the howling wilderness—the savage foe, what could have saved her from extinction but the hand of God? Again her existence was in peril. She was seen

planting her foot against arbitrary power, backed by the stern arguments of fleets and armies. What succour less than Omnipotent could have sustained her then? For seven long years she tracked her way to liberty, with bleeding feet. In that night of despondency was not God her friend? Did He not set the day-star of freedom on the brow of the firmament to cheer her desolate spirit? Did He not send an angel of mercy to guide her through the conflict? Can all this be forgotten; or must it be remembered to eulogize only the instruments—to glory only in the results—whilst the unseen hand of God is disregarded? And now that she reposes on the basis of a free constitution, enjoying privileges that were bought with blood, and a prosperity which contrasts strongly with the afflictions of her youth, shall she forget that she was the child of Providence? Shall she turn against her foster-mother, true religion, and talk and act as if she no longer needed her aid? Can this be done without incurring the displeasure of heaven? Yet this has *been* done. Fast were we marching in the track of ungodly France. We not only imitated her fashions, but we borrowed her philosophy. We caught the tone of her reckless materialism. We talked as if the state was our deity, on whose altar every thing must be sacrificed, even religion itself. Our congress could meet for business on God's holy day, and thus practically put the claims of politics above those of religion. From the high places of power and trust there went forth a malign influence, against which the ministers of religion and the ministers of justice united their strength in vain. A reckless law-defying spirit seemed to be in the ascendancy. The tyranny of the mob—worse a thousand fold than the tyranny of a monarch—threatened not only to disturb the peace of society, but to uproot the very pillars of public justice. Like the prodigal in Scripture, this nation seemed bent on spending the rich inheritance which God has given it, in riotous living. The very liberty for which our father's fought and bled, seemed fast coming into actual jeopardy.

We were becoming also a nation of gamblers. The citizen played for stocks, and the agriculturist for farms. The spirit of avarice under the plausible name of speculation, was let loose upon the whole community; so that even the hallowed precincts of our churches were in danger of being converted, like the temple of Jerusalem, into places of merchandise. As a vast community, it may be said of us, that we sacrificed to covetousness the highest moral considerations. The accumulation of wealth was the all-engrossing object of pursuit. If religion interposed her authority between the votary of the world and the object of his heart's desire, her authority was trampled under foot. If a pecuniary loss was threatened by carrying out a religious principle, the principle was not carried out. How has mammon swayed his tyrant dominion

over the soul! How has covetousness robbed it of its godlike attributes! This is a sin which has pervaded the entire nation. "Covetousness," says the voice that never errs, "is *idolatry*." To this idol we have as a nation paid willing homage. Like the Israelites at the foot of Sinai, we have, in the presence of a revealed God, set up and worshipped a golden calf. Can such a sin go unpunished? Has not God, as it were, broken up that golden image, ground it to powder, and made us drink of it to our sorrow? Are we not at this very moment reaping the bitter fruits of our idolatry? Oh yes, the accumulated treasures, the golden stores were found to be but "the baseless fabric of a vision." Men were rich in imagination, but poor in reality. They had all the *vice* of avarice without any of its ordinary gains. How offensive must such a course have been to that Being who has said, "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth"—"love not the world"—"ye cannot serve God and mammon!" Fearfully has that displeasure been expressed. Look over the scene and see the wreck of human hopes which has followed. First came the panic and then the explosion. Every heart trembled as the fiery flood laid our merchant princes in the dust. Still the angel of retribution, though passing over the land, was not recognized by a suffering community. Instead of looking to God and their own desert of evil, men began to perplex themselves with the assignable causes of their embarrassments. They fell into a system of mutual distrust and recrimination. It was at length decided, that a great political change was requisite, in order to rebuild the dilapidated fortunes of the republic. This the people willed and effected. But it is admitted that in *this* change there was too little reference to the providence of God. Must we not so judge, in view of the marked interposition, which, amidst a nation's grief and disappointment, declares "that no flesh shall glory in his presence?" In the personal character of our late chief magistrate, religion promised once more to grace our councils, and to shed her hallowed influence in the high places of power. But it seems we were not yet prepared for so great a blessing. The hand of God had not been sufficiently acknowledged. We talked of human wisdom too much and of Divine wisdom too little. The qualifications of the high incumbent were of such acknowledged appropriateness, we were tempted to forget that he held his office by a higher power than the will of the people. The feeling, if it did not amount to official idolatry, was sufficient to exclude a practical recognition of Divine Providence. Hence God has taught us, in this unlooked-for national affliction, that there is one to whom all power and wisdom are to be referred; and that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes."

How this sad event may be viewed by others I cannot say; but for one, I am disposed to look upon it as a judgment of heaven for

our national sins. It has moral aspects which I trust will not be disregarded by this nation. It has a voice for the heart and the conscience, as well as for the speculating and restless mind. God intends, by this providence, to make himself heard. It speaks to to the sensibilities and the anxieties of millions. Here is not the death of an ordinary individual, filling a common sphere of life, and touching by his influence but a few minds and hearts. When such die, there is indeed a little sanctuary of the affections, within which their memory is fondly cherished; but they are neither missed nor mourned by the community at large. But what shall we say of a death like this; which first enters the loved circle of home, crushing the hearts of affectionate relatives, and then takes in a wide range of personal friends, whose grief, if less in intensity, is not less sincere; and as the wave of sorrow rolls on, invades the hearts and disappoints the hopes of a nation of freemen? Is not this a judgment of God?

Consider also the circumstances under which it came. The storm of political strife and turmoil, which kept the horizon darkened for so long a time, had rolled off; and on the retiring clouds was seen the bow of promise, at which all eyes were willing to gaze. A man whom the people delighted to honor, was called by their suffrages to the most exalted and responsible station which they have it in their power to confer. The veteran soldier and statesman acceded to his country's wishes. He laid down the implements of husbandry and assumed the helm of state. He did it with the solemnity of one conscious that the voice of the people was, in this instance, the voice of God. It was too late for the stirrings of ambition. He trod too near the confines of another world to be elated by his elevation in *this* world. In his own language, he expected to end his days in peaceful seclusion on the banks of the Ohio. But he left that seclusion, under the impression that God and his country demanded his services in a wider sphere. Hence all his bearing, from the first announcement of his success, partook of that solemn and sublime spirit which bespoke a consciousness of high trusts committed to a dependent mind. The situation of the country—its internal difficulties and its external perils, formed a crisis too eventful, too uncertain, to allow either of levity or of sanguine expectation. Accordingly he declared to us that he felt his dependence on God. He combined, as every man in his circumstances should do, the spirit of religion with the responsibilities and the dignity of office. It was a noble spectacle, when in presence of assembled thousands, and within hearing of the universe, he stood forth and did public homage to christianity, declaring that he felt bound on that occasion to profess his respect for religion, and his belief that its influence is necessary for the security of our institutions and the happiness of the people. *That* was indeed an auspicious day,

which saw our late chief magistrate taking the oath of office on the portico of our capitol! With the constitution of his country in one hand and the word of God in the other, he acknowledged their mutual dependence, and swore fealty alike to patriotism and to religion. An unclouded sun shone upon that scene. Millions who were not permitted to witness it, imagined and felt with patriotic sympathy the sublime transaction. Yet how in one short month is that scene reversed! The athletic form—the beaming eye—the lofty mind, had passed away from earth, and left in the heart and soul of the nation a void, which it seemed vain to think of supplying. "It seems,"—in the language of the eloquent Hall on a similar occasion—"as if providence placed him on the pinnacle of society for the express purpose of rendering his fall the more conspicuous, and of convincing as many as are susceptible of conviction, that man in his best state is altogether vanity." In view of all the circumstances, must not this event, I again ask, be viewed as a judgment of God? Is it not a sufficiently marked providence to justify, nay to *demand* this day of national humiliation? Let the whole nation then go down upon their knees, and with one voice confess the accumulated guilt of ages. Shall this dark dispensation have in it more of mercy or of wrath? It is for *us* to say. It is for us to give it a character by our penitence or by our obduracy. The voice from heaven inquires over the grave of HARRISON, "Why should ye be stricken anymore?"

In the third era of the human race, we as a nation have a part to act. It is not simply, as some would affirm, to show to Europeans our power of self-government. This is, indeed, a noble tribute which we hope to pay to freedom; but even this tribute cannot be rendered, if we base not that freedom on religion. There is, however, a still higher part which, we trust, is to be enacted on this soil. The tree of life planted here two hundred years ago is to strike its roots so deep that its towering foliage shall overshadow the world. It is here to stand on its own eternal basis, nourished by no state patronage, but drawing its sap from "the fountain of living waters." "Its leaves are to be for the healing of the nations." Is such the high destiny to which the providence of God calls us? We are incapable of fulfilling it until we are humbled. Let the nation be prostrated before God. Let us mark his hand. Let us no longer seek for vain glory. Let us seek for peace—for rational liberty—for human happiness.

Ye men of influence and of power, our appeal is to *you*. The promptings of ambition must surely receive a check, as ye recur to the triumphs of death over strength, dignity and glory. That office which has been so suddenly vacated by his mandate, is in my view peerless among the dignities of earth. What an impressive lesson of the vanity of this world! How *small* when

greatest, how weak when strongest does man appear! It is said of Massillon, when the mortal remains of his illustrious monarch lay before him in funeral state, that he looked down into the coffin from the high altar, and broke the awful stillness of the scene by these words "there is none truly great but *God*." The sentiment was just, and the circumstances gave it weight. What is human glory but as the flower of the field, which flourisheth one moment and withereth the next. On a dying bed how contemptible a thing is fame! Edmund Burke exclaimed at the death of his only son, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!" Yes, noble statesman, if thou speakest only of our *earthly* relations. But *all* is not shadow. The soul is not a shadow; nor is its fearful retribution. Amid the shifting scenes of earth, there is something that endures. It is virtue—truth—piety—God. These are the stabilities of the universe. These live, when every thing else dies. It is the nature of these to be undecaying, eternal. Hence I commend to your chief pursuit, not the distinctions of earth however alluring in prospect, for often they dazzle but to blind. They absorb without satisfying the soul. If you seek these alone; or if for these you set aside God and religion, you act the part of a profane Esau who sold his heavenly birth-right for a sensual dish. But if the grave of HARRISON be not a sufficient lesson, go to that of Napoleon. The hero of a hundred battles reposing under the dome of the Invalids, illustrates both the strength and weakness, both the greatness and littleness of man. He ascended step by step the slippery height of power. He strode where others walked. His eagle eye sent its keen glance to the summit of universal dominion. But his lofty looks and his proud aspirations were the precursors of his ruin. So will it be with all who exalt themselves and who do not honor God. So will it be with our own nation, if she seek for any other glory or immortality but those which sacred truth shall sanction. We may strew our coasts with lines of defence—multiply our ships like Tarshish—boast of our mighty men, our tall cedars and our oaks of Bashan, all will be vain if God see fit to withdraw from us the wing of his protection. Religion then must be acknowledged, revered and obeyed. She must furnish us with motives, and preside as the conservative influence in our councils. She must extinguish those lusts "from whence come wars and fightings." She must unbind the burden of the oppressed. Instead of being quoted as authority for the continuance of slavery, she must be allowed to dissolve its chain by her own sweet spirit of love. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

The prospect for a sin-ruined world seems to me to brighten. The day of a false illuminism has passed by. Even France, the home of atheism, is turning her eyes upward in search of a God.

She has seen what it is to have a corrupt religion, and what it is to have *no* religion; and God grant she may feel her way to the true liberty of the Gospel. As to our own country, a most auspicious event occurs this day in the solemn prostration of the nation before the King of kings. This surely betokens good for America and for the world. The thunderbolt strikes not the lowly but the lofty object. May the cloud of indignation pass over us with but one startling shock! That has riven our hearts, and laid a noble citizen in the dust. Yet in *his* case it was not an *avenging* but a gracious stroke. It took him, as we have reason to believe, from an earthly to a heavenly principality. The hero, the statesman sleeps, but the *christian* lives. Life is renewed at the fountain of life. Oh may his mantle be transmitted to his successors; and may we derive from his death a benefit, which, perhaps, in our ingratitude, we might have been unwilling to have acknowledged in his life, however devoted to his country's good! May this day's humiliation precede a return of the smiles of heaven, expressed in the revival of true religion—in a general respect for law and social order—in the diminution of partizan strife, and the prevalence of christian patriotism—in the suppression of intemperance, profaneness and infidelity! Then shall our nation, as with the predicted moral beauty of ancient Zion, "arise and shine, her light being come, and the glory of the Lord having risen upon her."

SERMON CCCIV.

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"THE ISSUES OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT."

"*And the books were opened.*"—Rev. 20 : 12.

Amidst much that is obscure, the Revelation of St. John presents occasional gleams of prophetic truths too plain to be misunderstood.

Towards the close, especially, the lurid clouds are gilded by a terrific brightness. The awful future is unveiled. Scenes of overwhelming grandeur come into view, as the destinies of an accountable universe are plainly foreshadowed. If critics are at a loss for a clue, amid the accumulated imagery of the central portions of this wonderful book, they must be all agreed as to the import of the close. Let any mind contemplate the chapter from which the text is taken, and it will be seen that the final conflict between the powers of light and darkness is to be followed by that closing act of the Divine administration, viz., the universal judgment.

This prospective event was an appropriate revelation, in order to clear up, to the mind of the apostle, the otherwise disturbed aspect of the world's affairs; to assure him that Jehovah would in the end rectify apparent disorders, and vindicate before the universe the principles and decisions of his government.

His mind is carried even beyond this scene of solemn grandeur; and the images of sadness which may be supposed to have rested on his imagination are chased away, amid the sun-light of heaven and the harmonies of the blessed. Let us enter into the scene of wonders, and so far as possible, sympathise with the seer of Patmos, under the awful disclosures of a yet unaccomplished providence.

Deep is the interest which each of us should feel; for the events not only respect ourselves, but 1800 years have placed us, as it were, on the verge of fulfilment. If it be true, as is plausibly affirmed, that every two thousand years is to be marked by a great moral epoch, the signal lights of heaven may soon be expected, announcing in the third era of our race, disclosures analogous in moral grandeur to the destruction of the old world, and the advent of Christ.

But our text, in painting the scenery of a future judgment, brings before our consciences that personal investigation which is far more solemn in its bearings than *any* or *all* of the attending circumstances. "And I saw," says the apostle, "a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead small and great stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works."

Your attention is invited more especially to the clause, "and the books were opened." It will be my aim to explain, to illustrate, and to apply this sentence, in order to impress each of us with the responsibility of our existence, and the solemnity of our approaching destiny.

It is manifest, at a glance, that the imagery of the text is taken from the formality and solemnity of a judicial process.

In all ages of the world, where civilization has prevailed, it has been found necessary to erect and maintain a judicial tribunal. Human responsibility has been recognized; and the violator of law, after a fair opportunity for exculpation, has been obliged to submit to the stern decrees of justice. In some countries the formalities of the judgment-seat have been invested with an imposing solemnity. This was the case under the Roman government, where the tribunal was at times the throne itself; and where even the poorest citizen had the right of carrying his appeal up to the imperial decision. Hence we discover in the text and context allusion to this earthly tribunal, but amplified and exalted by the unapproachable grandeur of the scene and

circumstances. "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it." Vastness and purity are here ascribed to the very throne itself. Earthly tribunals are not always stainless. Justice, when delegated to the human administrator, may be outraged in her own sanctuary; but when she sits upon her *great white* throne, and holds the balances in her own hand there is no possibility of mistake or of partiality. He who shall occupy this throne has no sinister ends to answer. Justice, as said the immortal Hooker, makes her home in the bosom of God. When that great white throne comes into view, it will be the signal for the dissolution of the material universe. The first act of homage will be given by the heavens and the earth, which will flee away before it. It will stand forth amid the unobstructed expanse of eternity. What saw the prophet next? "I saw the dead small and great stand before God." The universe of accountable beings arraigned, standing in awful expectation of their joyous or their dread reward. "And the books were opened." No arbitrary decision is announced; but a deliberate investigation forms the basis of heaven's concluding verdict. This we must infer from the opening of the books, and the investigation according to their recorded items. "And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books."

Without further preliminary, we will consider what must be the nature of those books out of which we are to be judged.

They manifestly refer to the *past*. Without imagining a literal volume, we may suppose them to express some clear method of revealing to us, and to the universe, all past transactions. They must have reference to the entire period of our accountability. Hence they must embrace, in the *first place*, THE BOOK OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE. The providence of God is concerned in the creation, support, and destiny of every accountable creature. It enters into the arrangements of the natural world, which, however, are but subordinate to the rational and accountable universe. External nature becomes important as the machinery by which Providence acts upon the mind. It is felt to have a great influence in the formation of character; in modifying human responsibility; and its influence must enter largely into the final account which each inhabitant of earth is to render. Hence we cannot separate Providence from the complex operations of nature any more than we can from the confused affairs of nations and of individuals.

It would be impossible, if not inappropriate, to trace this thought in all its bearings. That angel to whom may be committed the task of our moral biography, called sometimes the recording angel, great as is his intellect, could not, it seems to me, trace the connection of Providence in its entire bearing on our moral history. But there is a Mind which *can*,—which embraces the end from the beginning—which "numbers the hairs of our heads, and understands even our thoughts afar off."

The first leaf in this book of Providence is our birth, and the circumstances of it. That a Sovereign Providence is concerned in the introduction of every human being into the world, none will deny who admit in any form the doctrine of providence. When we begin to BE we begin to ACT; and if our existence began under circumstances more favorable than that of another, our responsibility is *enhanced* by these circumstances. A pious parentage, early religious instruction, and the favoring influences of a christian community, arranged by Providence to meet us at the threshold of existence, must surely lay a greater responsibility upon us than if our infancy was marked by a total *reverse* of these circumstances. We have no right to suppose that the book of Providence, wherein is recorded our moral history, will fail to notice these things. When the seals of the judgment are unloosed, the dread account will commence far back in our history; the amount of our guilt will be measured by the light and advantages against which we have sinned. That Providence which ushers us into being, and which orders the circumstances of our earliest years, never withdraws from us its care and its control. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps; and whilst the HEART of man deviseth his way, the LORD directeth his paths." Hence, under the constant action of Divine Providence, every human soul is receiving an impress from circumstances which enter largely into the formation of a permanent moral character. This occurs in a way not to lessen the responsibility of man, nor to impair his liberty of choice. His circumstances elicit moral character, and confirm it; whilst the good or the evil is the result of his unobstructed preference of heart. This for the present we must take for granted. It would involve the necessity of too much abstract reasoning to make it plainer. It is easy, however, to see that one's early companions and acquaintances must have a direct bearing on the formation and fixedness of moral character. Creatures of imitation and of sympathy, we take imperceptibly the type of character with which we are most constantly in contact. If this companionship be accidental, the effect may not be so great as where it is the result of a sympathic preference. One thing, however, must be observed, that the tendency of social influence, where the grace of God does not intervene, is generally to increase the amount and power of depravity. For this reason it is that we find the base and the vile will more generally succeed in poisoning the principles of the moral, than the virtuous, by their efforts, can effect a reformation from vice and error.

When the book of Providence is opened many a soul will be found to have received an important bias from its social relations. One will be seen whose early training justified the hope of a good moral character; but a companionship was preferred which blasted these hopes in the bud. On the part of the seducer from virtue,

we do not deny, there exists a deeper criminality than in his unpractised victim; but the *latter* is far from being *guiltless*. In answer to excuses and palliations, we would say that Providence may be vindicated in the following manner, at least I think it will so appear in the judgment-day: When the vitious are thrown into the company of the virtuous, the first impulse with the former is that of respect for moral character. There is an instinctive homage paid to virtue. The vilest feel this. Milton makes even the devil to partake of this sentiment; for, in presence of the yet unsullied Eve, "he felt how awful goodness is, and virtue in her form how lovely." Is it not the design of Providence to force upon his depraved mind, by the power of contrast, a sense of his own guilt—to lead him to see and deplore his own melancholy fall? Yet such is not in general the effect. Satan-like, he sets himself to work, with a malicious selfishness, to reduce this companion to his own grade of infamy. He abuses the opportunity of self-improvement, and in making his companion *like* himself, he makes himself ten-fold more the child of hell than before.

But is the companion who falls into the snare guiltless? By no means. Why did Providence place him in contact with the seducer? We might answer this by asking why he placed *himself* there? But admitting that he is there by the action of Providence, what are his first emotions at the sight of a deeper depravity than his own? Is it not, in the first instance, revulsion—condemnation? Does not the conscience revolt, and cry out against all contact with such pollution? Are not these feelings the sentinels of God in the soul? And must not repeated efforts be made before a hearty companionship can be enjoyed? Do you ask, then, why Providence placed you in contact with evil companions? Manifestly to do them good; not to *accede*, but to *resist;* and the moment you *did* accede was a moment of guilt. If your moral character has been shaped in this way, blame not PROVIDENCE, but blame YOURSELF; for, whilst the voice of God within called you to resistance, your own stronger inclinations hurried you into conformity. We are responsible every one of us for our social influence upon others, and for their allowed influence upon us. This we shall see more fully and clearly in the day of judgment. "No man liveth to himself" is a *fact* as well as a divine maxim. Social sympathy will be seen at last to have had a powerful influence in making heaven more blessed and hell more dreadful.

AGAIN, *Providence arranges our business and pleasures so that they become to us unconsciously the instruments in the formation of our moral character.*

Amidst its avocations, the busy mind reflects but seldom on the fact that the pliant moral powers are affected constantly by all we do and all we say in the varied transactions of life. Yet such is the solemn fact. We can scarcely perform an act which has not some remote bearing on the awful future. Character is elicited

and confirmed by the very occupations which we pursue. We may make such occupations conduce to holiness or confirm the soul in sin. We may prosecute them for the glory of God or for the aggrandizement of self. In the one case we shall grow better, in the other we shall grow worse. In the one instance, we may be maturing for heaven; in the other, driving with more headlong impetus to hell. Those things which men are apt to imagine relate only to this life, will be found to reach forward into eternity, and will meet us as witnesses for God in the last solemn adjudication. Think you that a man's business will have nothing to do in settling and sealing his eternal destiny? Will he who thrives on the miseries of his fellow-men—who "builds on their ruin"—who lives on their death—will HE have nothing to answer for at God's awful tribunal?

When the book of Providence is opened, what terrific lines will be found there in relation to millions whose earthly prosperity exacted the transient homage of a selfish world, but whose whole course through life was one continuous training for DAMNATION.

Mercies and judgments enter into the arrangements of Providence, and modify moral character by their influence on the mind and heart. With what a lavish hand does the Almighty bestrew with blessings the path of mortals! This goodness of God may lead to repentance, or it may be abused to increasing obduracy of heart. So also the judgments of God may become the occasions of humiliation; or, as in the case of Pharaoh, may lead to a spirit of defiance. The subject of these mercies and judgments is responsible for their effect upon his soul. Every dispensation of Providence is intended to have a moral bearing; and such it WILL have and will be SEEN to have when the record of its proceedings shall be unfolded.

The talents and privileges conferred enter largely into the action of Divine Providence, and by their use or abuse serve to give emphasis to our final account. What and how many these talents are, will be seen more fully when the books are opened. How they have been neglected or improved, employed or buried, well-directed or perverted, will also then be seen.

These, and a thousand other circumstances dependent on Providence, go to make up an influence bearing directly or indirectly on the formation of character, and consequently on the final issues of the judgment. All these employ the thoughts—draw forth conversation—lead to action; and thus modify the whole man, whose history and destiny are interwoven with every movement of Providence. What a solemn and important book will that be, which, commencing with our birth, covers the entire history of our responsible existence! And this is *one* of the *books* to be opened!

II. *Another book, whose seal will then be broken, is the book of conscience.*

Conscience is a sort of moral memory; but may be said to *an-*

ticipate as well as to reflect. When it reproves for sins committed, it delivers a verdict preliminary to the awful judgment. The book of conscience is a sort of sealed or secret book; inasmuch as its record is carefully concealed from the public eye, however dark its registrations on the memory of the sinner himself. It opens its eventful page in early life. It begins with the first impressions of accountability. It stirs in the bosom of the child, and sends a tremor through the young heart whenever its growing depravity leads it into sin. Nothing escapes the all-vigilant eye of conscience, stationed in the soul as God's minister, and as the herald of his retributions. Every crime is duly notched. Every corrupt imagination, every wrong principle professed or indulged —every unhallowed word—every guilty act, goes into the account-book, to swell the score against the great day of reckoning. Even when sins are as frequent as the breath, and when the sinner fancies he has bribed conscience into acquiescence, the account still goes on. Page after page is indited, and day after day the leaves are filling, until the last awful hour, when, in the dreadful volume held up by conscience before the dying eye, the sinner sees at a glance the uncancelled magnitude of his crimes. But the seal is not broken, until the great white throne is set, and the books are opened.

Many a sinner dies without disburdening his conscience. Many conceal from their dearest friends the maladies and terrors of the soul. They are even themselves not aware of *all* that conscience has to say against them. Some sins of special enormity may have gotten a firm hold on the memory, and may occasionally disturb their peace; but how many thousands are obliterated amid the ceaseless recurrence of business and of pleasure! The deluded man may even attempt, by some partial reformation, to demand of conscience a quit-claim for all that has past. But conscience, my hearers, never lets go her hold on the accountable soul. She is not to be bought off by any supposed virtues; nor will she waive her claims for any equivalent which mere human merit can supply. If her voice be unheeded here, it shall be heard hereafter. If her record be denied on earth, it shall be admitted in eternity. In the great audit, when every accountable soul shall be weighed in the balances, the book of conscience must be unsealed, as an important record in those awful proceedings. What a tremendous revelation will that be, when every dark and unhallowed thought or desire which has dwelt in the human bosom shall be brought forth! Will it need any other witness to close our lips, and to certify our doom? Tell me, sinner, if conscience ALONE be thy accuser, will not her testimony be overwhelming? Will any apologies remain, after *she* has spoken? Will any virtues be seen, after her record has been laid open? Can *you* or *I*, or *any*, talk of human merit then? As her finger points to one dark scene after another which has transpired in the deep bosom

—as she expatiates on the aggravations of the act, tells of her remonstrances and of our determination to sin—what shall we have to answer, or to what subterfuge can we retreat? How will she strip off all disguises, and read in our ears the unvarnished report of a life spent in folly and in sin! If on earth her upbraidings be so terrible—if *here*, where the single remonstrance hangs like a viper upon the soul—if *here*, where so many objects are present to divert the mind and break the force of her blows, her rebukes are yet so fearful—what WILL they be when her accumulated account is laid open at the judgment-bar! O for one drop of peace-speaking blood! But THEN that blood will have exerted all its intended efficacy, and the prayer for its application will be utterly unavailing. Who is prepared to see opened, first the volume of Providence, and then the book of conscience? And yet all the dead, *small* and *great*, must encounter this scene, and must read their fate for eternity out of these dreaded records.

III. *The book of the law, the record of God's inspired word, must be then opened as the great statute-book of heaven.*

This is the only rule of right. This not only discloses the doctrine of Providence, but teaches its influence and its bearings on the moral history of mankind. This book, coming to us clothed with the high credentials of its Author, challenges our belief, and exacts our obedience. It lays down clearly the principles of holiness, and it defines with exactness the circumstances and the guilt of transgression. It gives us history, in order to instruct us by living examples: and it presents moral precepts, in order to fortify the soul under every circumstance of temptation. It is a history of God's most gracious designs. It is the record of their fulfilment in the wondrous birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Yea, it is the very words of the Son of God, stereotyped for all ages, and presenting a system of faith, to believe which is salvation—to reject which is eternal damnation. Such a book must surely be laid open, when the soul stands for its trial at the bar of God. This, then, is one of the books, whose mysterious page will there receive a flood of light. Will not God appeal to this high standard, and inquire who has received it in faith; and thus set to his seal that God is true? Will not its once-neglected pages flash, as it were, with the fires of indignation? Will not the sinner remember how often its mandates were echoed from the sacred desk, and struck with appalling but momentary force on the conscience, and then were coolly trampled under foot? Will not Jesus the Judge point to its revelations, and say, why did ye not receive them? Will not this glorious Saviour, clothed in the official grandeur of that closing scene, contrast solemnly with the insulted and crucified Man of Sorrows; and will not every line of the Bible that speaks of Him be as a dagger to the guilty soul? How can the sinner bear to meet its opening page? How can he look towards the

throne, when his now neglected Bible shall rise up to witness against him?

John saw these books opened, and the dead small and great judged out of the things which are written in these books. Here is a prospect for your contemplation! Turn your eyes off from the pageantry of earth—from the pressing and importunate cares of this transient life. Turn them upon the awful future. There is something here of solemn import; something that concerns both you and me; and from which there is no escape, and no concealment. Every word we utter—every design we conceive and prosecute—every movement we make—our business relations—our social relations—our talents, our privileges—what we *do* and what we *neglect* to do—all are accumulating upon the soul the impress of its eternal destiny.

Existence is a solemn trust: every soul in this house is invested with this trust. No power but God's can annihilate; therefore must existence go on. Yes, it *must* go on. As it proceeds it gathers responsibilities at every step. It is maturing for its eternal state. Think of this, man of the world. Think of it, vain trifler. Think of it, rejecter of the Gospel. Never can you cease to exist. If you become a suicide, you only hasten the dreadful consummation. Death ends not existence. Death *confirms* existence—makes its enduring; sets the seal, and settles the destiny. "*After* death cometh the judgment." Here is matter, I again say, for your consideration. Think of it you must; not only when the voice of the preacher sounds it in your ears, but think of it you *must* in those intervals when the soul, in spite of resistance, asserts her immortality. But is *thinking* of it all you have to do? Is there no preparation necessary? Are there no sins to be given up; no sorrows to be felt; no penitence to be felt and expressed; no prayers to be offered; no Saviour to be sought? Will you let existence go on, reckless how it is to end? Will you let the trial come, and care not whether it result in heaven or in hell? Will you invite the world to come in between you and all these fearful scenes, and so cheat yourselves of your preparation, until it is too late to prepare? Who will begin to-day the work of preparation? Who will act in a manner worthy of his immortal existence? Who will balance time with eternity, and give to eternity the attention which it deserves? Who will repent and believe the Gospel? All is staked on this. Will you give up your sins? Will you give up the world? Will you make this sacrifice for holiness, and for heaven? Nothing short of this can make death welcome, and disrobe the judgment of its terrors. Nothing else can give your name a place in the book of life; nothing else can place you among the redeemed, and give you a share in their unending joys. Dying sinner, what is your decision? From that decision the appeal, I solemnly declare, shall be to the judgment-seat of Christ.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 8. Vol. XV.] AUGUST, 1841. [Whole No. 176

SERMON CCCV.

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MEANS OF THE WORLD'S CONVERSION.

After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord."—Jeremiah, 31: 33, 34.

The happy period predicted in this passage has been the desire and the expectation of the church in every age. It has been the burden of prophecy and of prayer. Thousands of the noblest spirits that ever walked the earth, as they beheld this consummation in distant prospect, have kindled into rapture; and to hasten its approach, have tasked their utmost energies. The delay of this wished-for redemption of the world has ever been a subject of the church's lamentation. As we look backward over her history, we see her, in every period, prostrate before God, and crying, "Let thy kingdom come;" while a long line of patriarch's, prophets and saints, moving in sad procession, lift their tearful eyes, and stretch out their supplicating hands, saying, "Why do thy chariot-wheels so long delay?"

Who is there among us, having any sympathy with Christ, that has not shared in this feeling and uttered this cry? How is it possible for a Christian to look out upon the world—to contemplate our race grovelling in sensuality, and ravening with malevolence, until earth groans with suffering and heaven weeps in pity—and not pray that the days of darkness may be shortened? Who has not often inquired with inexpressible desire for some more expeditious mode of evangelizing the earth? Who has not asked, if there be not in the resources of Omnipotence some more potent means than have ever yet been employed, to bring men back to God?

Such passages of inspiration as our text, are adapted to quiet our impatient solicitude, not only by furnishing an assurance of the ultimate accomplishment of our highest hopes, but also by intimating the *mode* in which God's wisdom will operate to produce the glorious result.

It is proposed, in this discourse, to consider the following questions:

By what INSTRUMENT *will the renovation of the world be effected?* and, How *will that instrument be* APPLIED?

I. Let us inquire what *instrument* will be employed to bring about the blessed condition of the human family predicted in the text.

This instrument is *Divine truth*, most expressively called in the text, *knowledge of the Lord:* that is, the exhibition of the *Divine character*, more than any other truth, before all consciences, is to be the mighty engine by which Heaven will work out the moral revolution of the world.

Do any, at first view, imagine that this is a means too simple to accomplish so vast a result? But what is it "to know the Lord?" or rather, what is it not? All moral truth, every conceivable motive to goodness, is involved in knowing him—in a *true* idea of the holy Lord God. Let us illustrate this. We all know how we are awed by the presence of even a good man. The personal aspect of one who walks with God, whom we know to be greater and better than ourselves, has a power to restrain us from sin. Who, for example, could stand without solemnity before Isaiah, or Paul, or John; or beneath the venerable sanctity of their gaze, would be likely to harbor thoughts of sin? When angels were accustomed to visit the earth,

the Scriptures tell us that those whom they addressed were sore afraid, and fell to the ground, overpowered by the awful dignity of holiness. It was the impression of their immeasurable *moral superiority*—the august and venerable presence of unspotted *purity*, that made sinful men to shrink abashed, and hide their faces in the dust. And thus, when, in former ages, Jehovah came down in visible manifestations of himself to men, the sense of his holiness flashed conviction to the very heart. Thus Job declared, "I have *heard* of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now *mine eye seeth thee;* wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The same result was produced by the exhibition of the Divine glory to Isaiah. "Woe is me," he exclaims, "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips!" What was it, that thus, all at once, overwhelmed the prophet with a sense of his own and his people's vileness? It was because he had just seen the "glory of the Lord, high and lifted up, and his train" that "filled the temple." So, whenever God comes near to men's consciences, by any outward providence or inward impression, he makes himself to be seen as the antagonist of sin. Hence, to know the Lord—to have the true conception of the REAL GOD—is the most perfect law which a man can have before his conscience. What is the moral law itself, but God's character—a catalogue of his perfections, written out in the form of precepts? The soul that knows what God is, sees intuitively what itself ought to be. He has only, then, to present *himself*, as he is, for ever before the mental view, in order to keep men under perpetual admonition of right and wrong. This is one cause why heaven is such a holy place. And the reason why all systems of heathenism, and all schemes of merely human philosophy are unable to produce goodness in men, is that they present distorted or defective views of the Divine character. Think of the Jupiter of the Romans, and the Vishnu of the Hindoos; contrast their moral attributes with the Jehovah of the Bible, and you are at no loss to account for the degradation of their votaries. You see at once why Paganism is a system of wretchedness, even for the life that now is; and why Christianity restrains and blesses even those whom it does not convert, by continually holding up before them at least some dim portraiture of the true God. The power of the Divine character and example, as a per-

suasive to virtue and preventive of sin, is immeasurably great. Such a conception as that of a perfect, Almighty Being—the upholder and governor of all things—is the grandest of which the mind is capable. The idea of a *present* God—a *real, living, all-knowing, all-pervading* Spirit—having an infinite aversion to sin and love of goodness—is a thought that bows down the soul in utter abasement, and sways over it an infinite authority, In proportion to the clearness with which this idea is apprehended by men, are they brought under the control of moral motives. The Pagan, for example, has only the feeblest conceptions of God's character; hence his feelings are wrong, and his worship unacceptable and debasing. He changes the glory of the incorruptible God into a lie, and therefore feels from it no impulses towards a life of holiness. The sinner in a christian land comes somewhat nearer the truth; he drops the notion of a *material* God, so that he does not bow down to stocks and stones. Still, God, as a *holy God*, he does not like to retain in his knowledge. He turns away from the thought of him—he says in his heart, "No God! no God!"—he buries himself in the world—he drugs his conscience with every opiate—he drowns the voice of truth in the din of business or the shout of mirth—he shuts his eyes against that which may be known of God, lest the light of the knowledge of the Divine glory should shine into his heart.

It is therefore with a most beautiful propriety that the Scriptures use the phrase, "knowledge of the Lord," as a comprehensive term for all truth and goodness. To know him, is to know his character, his government, his rights, his claims on us, and our duties to him. It is to know his plan of mercy, his Son, and his Spirit—his pardoning and sanctifying grace. And when the world is full of this knowledge, then God will be seen by every man standing right before him, and the beauty of his character will have such infinite authority over the conscience, that all souls will form themselves, and all their operations, according to this model ever present before them. Well, then, is it written, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord."

II. Let us now ask, secondly, By what *methods and agency* is this

grand instrument to be *applied* to the renovation of the world? *How* is this kingdom of the Lord to be spread all over the earth, and to be brought in contact with every human heart?

In reply to this deeply interesting inquiry, we remark, that the Holy Scriptures, all along throughout the whole line of promise and prophecy, speak in such a way as to imply two different and distinct eras under the new dispensation; and they very plainly teach, that the truth will be spread in a different manner in each of these eras. One of these is spoken of as coming *after* a certain state of things. Thus is the text: "*After those days*, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts," &c. When the period thus indicated shall arrive, we are taught to expect a larger measure of the Divine influence—a measure quite above and beyond that which now accompanies the preaching of the Gospel. This special influence will probably differ in degree rather than in kind from that which is ordinarily enjoyed. It will act more directly and more efficiently on the hearts of men. It will not be independent of all use of means, but there will be in it so much of God—the effects will be so speedy and so great, that means will be comparativly unobservable. Thus, in the text, this great moral revolution is ascribed to an immediate agency of God himself. Saith the Lord, "I will PUT MY LAW in their inward parts, and WRITE IT in their hearts." Other expressions, denoting sovereign acts of the Deity, are also employed; such as "pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh." "He shall come down," says the Psalmist, "like rain on the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth." "Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousnes shall look down from heaven." Nothing can exceed the richness of the promises respecting the majesty and prosperity of God's kingdom in that day. The Lord declares that he will "say to the north, give up, and to the south, keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." "Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." All obstacles will be removed. "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together:

for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "The Lord will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him." "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sighing and sorrow shall flee away." "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and all nations shall flow unto it." There shall no longer be occasion for men to teach every one his neighbour and his brother, saying, "Know the Lord, for all shall know him, from the least of them to the greatest of them."

Such, then, is the way in which the knowledge of the Lord will be diffused in the latter day. God will by his providence and Spirit, with amazing rapidity and grandeur, accomplish the renovation of the world. We know not how soon this happy period shall arrive, but come it surely will. The day is on the wing when the empire of sin in this world shall be overthrown, and the crash of its fall shall reverberate afar through the dominions of God.

But ere that time arrive, there is another era—an era in which the truth is to be spread mainly through the instrumentality of the church. It is in *this* period that we are placed. The time has not yet come in which God will specially interpose for the immediate triumph of holiness. He observes, and requires his people to observe, an established connection between means and ends. For all the good he will bestow, "he will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." They shall reap only as they sow. If they desire his kingdom to come, they must deny themselves and labor for that object. If they wish men to be saved, they must place truth before them, and press its claims upon the conscience. The language of the text teaches this: "In that day, saith the Lord, they shall teach *no longer* every man his brother," &c. Observe, it shall *then* be *no longer* needful—implying that *till* then it *is* needful to *teach* men, individually, to know the Lord. Here, then, we have the mode in which God wills that the great instrumentality for converting the world shall now be applied; it is by the direct efforts of his people to spread the truth. He might, indeed, take the work out of our hands: he could, by a sovereign and immediate process, cause the glorious result to spring forth at once, perfect and

complete. But he has great and gracious reasons for the delay. He has, by a most beautiful and blessed arrangement, linked our agency into the chain of causes which he employs, on purpose to educate us in holiness. By throwing upon his people the responsibility to care, and labor, and pray, he brings out their love, their self-denial, their confidence in himself. Did he not admit our co-operation, but, by a direct influence, himself perform this work, how shall we ever exercise some of the choicest graces of the christian character? How could we sympathize with the Redeemer in his tears and sufferings for a dying world? What occasion would there be for our sacrifices and self denial? Where would be the faith that now trusts in him, even in the dark—that hopes against hope, and labors on amid circumstances the most adverse? What demand would there be for submission, where there were no trials; for courage, where there were no foes; for perseverance, where there were no obstacles? Besides, the character of God is to be illustrated by a long series of developements. His great mind is not in haste, as are the minds of men, to leap to the end of his work. He can afford to wait for the slowly revolving course of ages to disclose his plans, and establish all their destined results. And when this is done, then shall the end come. When successive dispensations shall have fully brought out, one by one, his matchless attributes, and written in living light on the scroll of heaven each great principle of his government, then the lingering years of delay shall cease. Then God will no longer hold back his mighty hand from fulfilling the desires of his mighty love. He will come forth from his pavilion, where he has for ages hidden his power; he will make bare his arm, and apply the energies of his omnipotence to the work of making all things new.

But for the present, the command of God leaves this great work in the hands of his people. "Go teach all nations;" "Go preach the Gospel;" "How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?" In this stage of the church's history, at least, it is evidently the Divine arrangement, that men shall be themselves the instruments of saving their own race.

And here we notice the great hindrance to the world's conversion. While men hold the right *theory* as to the church's agency in saving

sinners, they *practice* as if no such agency existed, and devolve the work upon the providence of God alone. The prevailing feeling is one which removes the responsibility from individual consciences, and throws it upon some agency distant from ourselves. We know that this is said to be an age which magnifies human instruments, and delights in a visible activity. Grant it; but still this spirit shows itself in speculation, rather than in actual effort. It expends itself in magnificent *schemes*—in laying large plans, which promise mighty consequences, rather than in faithful labor as individuals. The men who will co-operate zealously in some splendid enterprise that promises a large result, think they can do nothing in some plain, obvious work, that lies over against their own doors. So then, even if there be a tendency in the age to *rely* too much on human agency, we see no tendency to *put forth* too much agency in individual labors. We see no such thing as a community of men, *each* of whom is weighed down with a sense of *personal* responsibilites. Grand operations, that promise grand results, do indeed find enough to embark in them, because they fire the imagination. But those duties which a man is to do alone—which rest upon him though all other men should stand aloof, have few attractions, and receive little attention. And what we now need for the conversion of the world is, that each Christian should irradiate his *own sphere* with the light of holiness; and next, that he should teach—each particular man should teach, his neighbor and his brother. Then would every neighbourhood and every fraternity of men know the Lord, from the least even to the greatest.

Let us give an illustration. During the prevalence of the cholera, in Ireland, in 1832, when the utmost apprehension prevailed in every cabin, some ecclesiastic is said to have devised the following expedient to quiet the fears of the people: a piece of burning turf was exhibited on a certain occasion, said to have been lighted by fire from heaven: pieces of it were given to the people, with the injunction, that each man should go to his own house, and kindle his fire with this sacred turf: and they were assured that as long as this fire was perpetuated, the pestilence should not come nigh their dwellings. But, one condition of this sacred gift, was, that every man, after lighting his own hearth, should carry a piece of the fire to his

neighbor And thus, in an incredibly short space of time, it spread from house to house, and from hamlet to hamlet, over the whole district. Now, what was in this case a mere imposture, is, in the case of the Gospel, a reality. The truth of God, received by the soul, is an infallible preventive of the fatal tendencies of sin; and it is given to us on the condition that we distribute it to others. We must "teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother." "The Spirit and the bride say, come; and let *him that heareth* say, come."

That this is the way to do a great work, we learn from the analogies of the natural world. How are the coral isles of the ocean made? Not by being upheaved by some grand convulsion from the bosom of the deep; but by the ceaseless labors of little insects, each of which works in its own place, and adds its mite to the accumulated mass. It stops not to form combinations and lay plans, but labors on in its sphere. How is the huge globe watered and made productive? Not by great seas, but by little streams, or rather by single drops of rain and dew, each refreshing a single leaf or blade of grass. How is bread produced for the millions of mankind? Each stalk of corn becomes responsible for a limited number of grains. And in the moral world we see results produced in the same way. How is it that vice is propagated? How are drunkards, gamblers and infidels made? Not by wholesale, but by individual contact. One corrupt heart infects some other heart; one polluted soul taints some other soul with the infection of its own depravity; and thus recruits are ever multiplied for the host of Satan. Let it be so in the work of salvation. Let each Christian labour to rescue his neighbour and his brother, and how soon will the world be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. According to this Divine arrangement, philanthropy ceases to be an ambitious reaching after things beyond our sphere, and addresses itself to the first object it meets. The Christian looks around upon his own family, and says, "*This* is my starting point: here I begin *my* share of the work of converting the world. This companion, these children, these associates, demand my first regard, because God brings their condition first before my conscience, and places them most directly under my influence. If I cannot let my light so shine as to guide *them* to heaven, how shall I be a light to those

that are afar off?' If I am unfaithful in that which is least, how can I be faithful in much?" Could a man never make his influence felt beyond a single individual, and that one the *humblest child*; still, there is infinite propriety in his addressing himself at once, and with all earnestness, to the work of saving that child from ruin. There is a moral beauty in it, and a benefit to himself, independent of any other result.

Nor will such benevolence be restricted to its own immediate circle. A genuine concern for the salvation of *one* soul is of the nature of the most enlarged philanthropy. Thus it has ever been. The men who have done the greatest good in the world, and most command our veneration for the sublimity of their benevolence, have begun their career of well-doing by blessing their own immediate circle. Some of our most devoted missionaries, were first missionaries in their own families and in their own villages. Thus it was with Martyn, and Brainerd, and Gordon Hall. This was the spirit of Harlan Page. Thus it has been with some beloved living examples. Ere they went abroad to foreign fields, they were living epistles among us, known and read of every one with whom they came in contact. Whether in the ministry or not, the history of their lives is this: "Warning every man, and teaching every man, night and day, with tears." And so, too, the Saviour of the world, in his own exemplification of the workings of love, "went about doing good," seizing every opportunity to teach *individuals*, as well as the multitude: the fishermen of Galilee, as really as the throngs of the temple—a woman by the well of Samaria, as truly as his great congregation on the mount—received his Divine instructions.

This, then, is what must abound ere the world will be converted—*personal holiness* as the vital principle—personal *labor* as the mode of effort—and *individual persons* as the subjects. We must depend less on plans, and betake ourselves to deeds. We should not wait for the millenium to burst upon the world in some distant land, but each one must labour to make a millenium around himself. Let every individual do this, and create about himself a circle of light; let these circles become so numerous as to meet and blend their radiance, and the whole horizen will be at once illumined. O, let the imagination dwell for a moment on the glorious idea! Let us

suppose each of the children of God thus coming up to his individual duties to his own soul, and to his neighbor's. He walks through the world with the light of heaven on his brow, and its love and peace in his heart He trusts in the Lord too firmly to be cast down in gloom. He is so happy in God, that the only tears he sheds are those of compassion for dying souls. He lives so much in converse with heaven, that his very raiment savors of Paradise, and men take knowledge of him that he hath been with Jesus. His presence is a rebuke to sin, and his life an unanswerable argument in favor of religion. Infidelity cannot live where he is, nor a quiet conscience dwell in the sinner's breast. Without waiting for the stimulus of any combined effort, his own abounding love incites him to seek the salvation of men; and he goes to work immediately, and on the spot, to do all the good he may; and continues to do it. Thus he is always prepared to unite with others in every proper species of *associated* action—to carry out, on a large scale, the holy principles which he has cherished into maturity in his own private sphere. Now, imagine this same spirit to be general—that whole churches—yea, the common brotherhood of disciples on the earth—were such as this; and no foe of Zion, nor combination of foes, in or out of the pit, could retard her career of conquest. Soon the tide of victory would roll over oceans and continents, surging against every mountain, and pouring through every valley and triumphal song, "The kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, is given to the people of the saints of the Most High."

From this subject we learn,—

1. The true remedy for all our social and political evils, Although our country is still young among the nations of the earth, she has made rapid strides in sin; and already voices prophetic of woe begin to be heard in the distance. The simple manners, the integrity, temperance, and contentment which become private life, are giving way to pride, luxury, and the lust of gain. Instead of inviolate public faith, we have political chicanery. Patriots are becoming few, and demagogues numerous. The awful sanctions of law are losing their hold on the popular mind. Justice and judgment, instead of being regarded as things of eternal fixedness, are degenerating

into matters of fluctuating expediency, that may be bought and sold. Error in opinion and corruption in practice spread rapidly, and find ready advocates; while truth and virtue are opposed at every step. And these evils are only outward symptoms of a disease that is deeply seated in the body of society. And what is the remedy? How shall our beloved country be delivered from the ruin that impends? *By spreading the knowledge of the Lord.* We must teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother. Every Christian must bring the power of the character and law of God to bear upon some one or more consciences. We must hold up the great and glorious attributes of Jehovah before men, till they become a *law* unto them, written in the very heart; till the internal authority and force of love will not permit the oppressor to grind the face of the poor, nor the assassin to lie in wait for blood, nor the magistrate to sell judgment for bribes Then, private friendship, truth and righteousness, and public faith, and the majesty of law will reign in our land; the Sabbath will be honored; the Holy Spirit will dwell among us; God will be our God, and we shall be his people.

2. We also learn the excellence of those methods of doing good which exercise the conscience on questions of personal duty. Those forms of benevolent action accord best with the Divine will, which employ individuals in laboring for the salvation of specific subjects; which combine the living heart, and eye, and voice of a Christian to compass the rescue of some particular soul from hell. Hence the excellence of all those forms of effort in which teaching is employed. The mother amid her children,—the teacher of a Sabbath-school or Bible-class,—the faithful distributer of Tracts,—and, pre-eminently, the pastor and the missionary,—are thus engaged. All these may indeed fail; they often do fail, by aiming at no specific results, but dealing only in vague generalities. But if they do justice to their opportunities, and if they aim at distinct objects, and seize each particular occasion to benefit individual souls; under God, they will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the service of the Lord.

3. Finally, this subject illustrates the mode in which revivals of religion may be promoted. It is not—as some are apt to feel—by any particular set of measures. It is not by the zeal or eloquence of preachers merely. Ministers have their place, and a place, too, pre-

eminently honourable among the agents for saving men. But they must also have the co-operation of the individual members of the church. Without this they labor in vain, or at best with only a partial effect. A revival that shall penetrate the *mass* of the community, must be carried into it by the *living agents* who are accustomed to mingle *with* the mass, and who will go hither and thither, attaching themselves to individuals. A military commander, without soldiers, could not subdue a hostile country by means of plans and general orders, or by the prowess of his single sword. Nor can a minister expect to be the means of extensive and permanent good, if unaided by the prayers and co-operation of his people, acting each in his personal and separate capacity, as well as in concert with others. We may see, then, why we have hitherto accomplished so little for our Master, and how we may hereafter effectually serve him in the conversion of men. Henceforth, let our course be the simple plan, not to wait for others, but each one do the *first good thing that offers*, —and then the next—and the next; and thus proceed, filling up our lives with a succession of individual acts of usefulness. O, brethren, our vows to Christ were separate and individual vows of personal devotement; and at the judgment-day, the account we shall render will not be a *general account*, handed in by churches or societies; but "every one shall give account of HIMSELF to God," and shall receive, each for himself, an individual reward or condemnation.

SERMON CCCVI.

BY REV. I. S. SPENCER,

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"LIVING AND WALKING IN THE SPIRIT."

"*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*"
Galatians, 5 : 25.

THIS passage is addressed to the people of God. It contains an exhortation founded on one of those great doctrines of the Bible, which the people of God all believe, and which the most holy and favored of his people always find delightful to their souls. It is a truth clear and unquestionable as any in the Bible, that the children of God become such by the adopting power of the Holy Ghost. They are begotten of God; they are *born* into his holy family, *not of blood*, nor of the *will of man*, nor of the *will of the flesh, but of God.* God himself is their father. From that degradation and helplessness of spiritual death in which they were plunged God has lifted them up. From that course of prodigal profligacy in which they had wandered he has called them back. The spirit of fear has been exchanged for the spirit of love; and their recovering, adopting, forgiving Lord has removed the ruling power of worldly aims, to give supremacy and permanence to those aims which go out after the high birth-right of the sons of God. Recognizing this idea, as fixed in the minds of those to whom he was writing, the apostle founds upon it the proposal, *let us also walk in the Spirit.* If we are, indeed, of that number who *live by the Spirit,*—who, from being *dead in trespasses and sins,* have been made *alive unto God* by the Spirit,—let us *walk by the same Spirit:* let us have our whole conduct consistent with a christian's existence, with a christian's duties, with a christian's calling, and with a christian's joys and aims.

My brethren, all your hopes for the future, and both the felicities and the infelicities of the past, will conspire for the enforcement of the exhortation.

You hope, after you have done with this world, to go to a better one. We are *saved by hope*, says the Apostle: and both the duty and the privilege of the believer call you to be *able*, through Divine grace, to hope for perfect and eternal joys in heaven. But you hope to attain them, not in negligence, not by inaction, not by merely waiting the flow of some rapid stream, which shall bear you onward to that blissful ocean whose surface is never ruffled by angry storms, and whose dashing billows never excite fear or create danger. No, no! As wise believers, you are sensible that heaven is a *prize*, and not an accident; that you are to attain it by *fighting the good fight*; by going on, from field to field of christian mastery, till your feet shall tread upon the pavements of the celestial city. Wise hope never promises *any thing*, but as she points with fixed finger, to the way, and the walk, and the warfare of the sons of God. Only as you *walk by the Spirit* you expect to reach the home of saints, the *city of the New Jerusalem*.

Of the same tendency is your felicitous remembrance of the past. The greatest happiness which you are able to gather by any remembrance of days that are gone, is found in the evidence that you have made some progress in the Divine life, and thus done something to glorify God. But *how* have you made it? You must have made little indeed, if you do not know that it has been by no power of your own; that at every step God has helped you on; and that, aside from Divine aid, you would now be as distant from the home and country of the blessed as the most wayward prodigal that wanders on the fields of sin. Yes, if you have entered into the way to heaven, and made considerable progress in it, you are fully sensible that you have gained the victory over sin, baffled the adversary, kept the world under foot, held sweet and holy communion with God, only when you have *walked in the Spirit*.

The happy experiences of the christian are a fund of instruction. They contain many a lesson rich in Divine wisdom, and pleasant for the believer's meditation. But they contain no lesson so plain as this; that every item of happy experience has come from walk-

ing with God. It is when you have *walked in the Spirit*, that the *candle of the Lord has shone upon your tabernacle*, darkness has vanished, and your soul has been cheered with the presence of God and the light of life. It is when you have *walked in the Spirit*, that fear has departed, affliction has lost her sting, sin has failed of its enchantment, and you felt that you were happy because, through grace, you were God's. You could thank him for your joys, you could submit and not murmur, if he removed them: resting on him, you could exclaim, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

Your *want* of felicity, too, as christians, admonishes you that nothing has so much diminished your joys as the want of a close and constant walk with God. Oh! It is when you have forsaken *him* that he has forsaken *you!* You failed to *walk in the Spirit*, and then you failed of the *joys of your salvation*. If you have ever been so unhappy as to find your christian comforts few; as to find your light dimmed; your heart sad; your fears prevailing over faith; and your soul sinking in the deep waters; you found it so only at those unhappy periods when you failed to walk in the Spirit. Your very mourning showed this: oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when, by his light, I walked through darkness. The exhortation of the text, therefore, is enforced by your hopes, and happiness, and fears.

By *the Spirit* in the text is meant none other than the Holy Ghost, the third person in the adorable Trinity. It is by his efficiency that the hearts of men are renewed. Before that efficiency is exercised they are *dead*, according to the language of the Scriptures;—they are dead in sin, dead to holiness, dead in law, and dead to every qualification for the joys of holiness and heaven. But when the sanctifying power of the Spirit is exerted, they are made *alive*. They are alive, because, delivered from the curse of the law; they are alive in holiness; they are alive, because they are quickened by the Spirit of God; they are alive by that kind of vitality which marks all the members of the family of God, and qualifies saints and angels for the joys around his throne. It is not by the powers of our fallen nature, that they are alive; it is not

by the energies of conscience, by the leadings of understanding, nor by the strong promptings, even, of that hope, which would grasp possessions more permanent than the unsubstantial pleasures of this world. They live by the *Spirit*, if they live at all as christians. God has *quickened* them. They are *created anew* in Christ Jesus.

On this principle the apostle then appeals to their consistency, *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit;* if we are indeed of that number who have any right to think themselves christians, let us *live* as christians: if we *possess* a spiritual existence, let us maintain a spiritual walk; let us live as children of light, and not of darkness. This is the nature of the exhortation.

But it is not of unaided human nature to do so. *Nevertheless I live, yet not I,* is the inspired account of spiritual life. If we *live*, it must be *in the Spirit;* if we show the signs of life, or discharge the offices of life, or gain the benefits of life, if we *walk*, it must be in *the Spirit.*

But this exhortation would be greatly inappropriate, were the Spirit communicated without any reference to our endeavors or desires. In that case we should have only to wait and to receive; action and anxiety would be alike in vain. The Spirit, however, by which growth in holiness is secured, and without which nothing of importance in religion is ever accomplished, is not so communicated to believers. There is a temper and conduct calculated to invite his presence; and there is a temper and conduct calculated to invite his departure.

That we may be able to obtain comfort and growth as believers; that, by the presence of the Divine Spirit with us, we may *walk in the Spirit;* let us see how we may be most likely to secure his continued presence.

1. If we would have much of the presence of the Spirit we must *value* it highly.

It is true, God sometimes grants his spiritual presence where it has been little or none at all desired. In the first act of sanctification in the renewal of the soul and perhaps sometimes in the recovery of his backslidden people, he acts without great reference to the previous estimation in which he was held. But surely he does not ABIDE with those with whom he is an unwelcome guest

Where he is not desired, he does not dwell. The Holy Spirit does not stay in the heart that does not want him. And if the people of God would have much of the Divine presence, they must learn to value the Divine presence. Heavenly blessings will descend in most liberal measure, where they are most coveted, and sought, and prized. Heaven, indeed, is rich in mercy; and it is the principle of free, divine, unmerited benignity in God, by which are regulated the communications of his grace. But Jehovah guards his majesty. It is worthy of him to do so. And he will withdraw from that people who do not value his presence;—whose estimations of heart are such, as to do great dishonor to the majesty of God. Let the hearts of God's people set a high value upon God's presence; let them learn to estimate it as they ought; let them prize it above all price, *coveting earnestly the best gifts;* and they may hope God will be with them—will *abide* with them—will be their *pillar of cloud* and their *pillar of fire*. But let them value lightly the Spirit; let them repose the hopes of their heart on something else; let them forget their need of Divine aid; let their affections go out, habitually and most strongly and readily, after other joys than those of holiness and heaven; and then the Spirit will depart,—darkness will rest upon the door of the tabernacle,—the Comforter will go away from the *temple of God!—Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?* Do ye forget, that when the Saviour was about to ascend into heaven, the consolation that he left for his weeping disciples was, *It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I depart, I will send the Spirit unto you?* Heed ye not the fact, that the *Spirit seals us to the day of redemption?* Are you unmindful that we *know we are of God, by the Spirit which he hath given us?*—that we know not *what to pray for as we ought*, but *when the Spirit itself* (in our hearts) *maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered?* Are you unmindful that it is the *Spirit*, which is to *lead you into all truth*,—to *help your infirmities*,—to *take of the things which are Christ's, and shew them unto you?* How is it, then, that there can be any undervaluings of his presence? Let us only remember the magnitude of his offices, and we shall be furnished with demonstrations enough that there is nothing else which we ought more eagerly to desire, more highly to prize more prayerfully

and constantly to seek. It is the Spirit which disperses the darkness of spiritual ignorance, subdues the obstinacy of sin, melts down the hardness of the heart, and opens it to the Saviour. It is the Spirit which *teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight*; marks us as the children of God; enables us to resist evil, and gives us the victory over self and sin. It is the Spirit which teaches us to relish holiness: he kindles our desires for God; he furnishes us a foretaste of the joys of heaven; and being given to us on account of Christ the Son, he communicates all the blessings of redemption, and reconciles us to the Father. It is the Spirit which joins us to Christ, and makes us one with him. By the Spirit we repent; by the Spirit we believe; by the Spirit we love, and hope, and rejoice. By the aid of the Spirit we make our soul's everlasting covenant with God. The Spirit is God himself, communicating to a lost world the purchased blessings of the redeeming Son of God!

Abundant, therefore, are the grounds for prizing above all price, and desiring with the whole heart, the presence of the Holy Spirit. And every church and every believer may rest assured, that, if they would have much of the presence of the Spirit, and thus. *walk by the Spirit*, they must highly prize and greatly desire the presence of the Spirit with them.

2. If we would have the aids of the Spirit in our christian walk, we must be sensible of our *need* of it. Few persons who profess to know any thing of religion will hesitate to acknowledge their dependence upon Divine aid. But assent of the understanding is one thing, and sensibility in the heart is quite another. That is no sensibility of heart which consists in a mere knowledge of fact. Few persons are so ignorant of what the Scriptures teach, as not to know that we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to aid and strengthen us for the production of any thing that is good. But still this mere knowledge is not all we need. The *heart* needs to *feel* it. The soul needs to have it, as one of its deepest sensibilities. A fact forced upon the understanding, and at the same time not welcomed by the heart, produces in us no proper homage to heaven. Feeble worms like us ought to possess the most deep-seated consciousness of our insufficiency. Our necessity should be a sentiment of the heart. It should be felt as the most certain truth; it should be familiar as the most common principle; it should

be realized as belonging to the very nature of our hearts and of our religion, that we are able to take no step in holiness but by the Spirit of God. Without this we shall not render the proper homage nor the proper honor to God. Without this we shall not sufficiently distrust ourselves. Without this we shall not be free from those assailings of pride and creature sufficiency which tend, most of all things, to keep the Spirit of God out of the heart. Feel your need, brethren, if you would find your helper. Realize your dependence; love your dependence. Love to realize it. Many a believer fails, even in proper attempts and duties, for want of this. He resembles the warrior clothed in armor that does not fit him. He resembles the aroused but mistaken judge in Israel, robbed of his strength: *I will go out, as at other times before, and shake myself, while he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.*

3. In order to enjoy the presence of the Spirit, we must have *faith* to believe in the *free communication* of it, as well as to depend upon its holy efficiency. It needs no argument to show, that the human mind will not depend on that which is regarded as beyond its reach and its expectation. We need faith in God; faith to believe the promise; faith to rely upon its fulfilment. We ought to have such ideas of the veracity of God, and the goodness of God, and the communicativeness of God, mingled with such ideas of our own weakness and want of sin, that, like Abraham, we shall not *stagger at the promise;* and that, like Paul, we can say, *when I am weak, then am I strong.* The veracity of God is pledged to the fulfilment of the promises. The goodness of God is as infinite as his power, and is exercised in bestowing. There is a readiness in the Holy Ghost to come and to dwell with true believers. And it is for these reasons that we are exhorted to be *strong in the Lord*, to *walk in the Spirit*, to be *filled with the Spirit.* Such expressions make it manifest, that God would have our faith embrace the idea of free communications of the Spirit; and would have us know that sovereign grace has established a connection between our depending faith and the communications of the Holy Ghost. We are bound to be *strong in the Lord*, because the Lord is ready to impart strength to those who in faith rely in him. We are bound *to be filled with the Spirit*, because in the careful use of the appointed means of grace faith should expect to be filled, and shall not expect in vain. We are bound to *walk in the Spirit*, be-

cause the Spirit is ready to impart to every traveller to eternity, both wisdom and strength *to walk and not be weary*, whilst journeying towards that better land. In few things do men more offend God, than in their want of faith in his blessed promises. It is this want which makes them shrink from recorded duty. It is this want which leads them to substitute something else in the place of the Divine command. It is this want which often brings up expediency, and manufactures it into a rule of life; which covers over and hides the very command of God; and because the command seems difficult, leads to that rebellion which is *as the sin of witchcraft, and to that stubbornness which is as iniquity and idolatry*. Let us believe the promises. Let us depend on God to fulfil them. Let us be diligent in the service of God, yielding ourselves, without reserve, to all his commands. Let us go where he points, discharging *duty* in fear and in faith, and leaving results to him. And then, and not till then, we may hope for his favorable, his forgiving, his strengthening presence. That unbelief which questions his promise, and therefore hesitates at his requirement, or neglects his invitations, is a great offence against the veracity of the Most High God.

4 If we would experience much of the Divine Spirit, we must be careful to maintain a *temper of mind suited* to his presence. The Scriptures make it evident, that the Holy Spirit may *be grieved* away from the hearts of his people. *They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their enemy*. There are a thousand feelings which rise in the hearts of men, which are opposed and offensive to the Spirit of God: and if they are cherished and indulged,—indeed, if they are not resisted, and baffled, and subdued, the continuance of the Spirit with them is not to be expected. There are *passions which war against the soul;* there are gratifications of worldliness and vanity; there are scenes and societies of ungodliness which must be forsaken by the people of God, or the Spirit will not dwell with them. The hateful, the turbulent, the petulent, the proud, the impatient, the ungentle, the unforgiving; those whose minds are easily angered, and agitated, and ruffled, need not expect much of the presence of that Spirit whose fruit is *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*. Those who indulge in irascible and malignant feelings, who cherish bitterness, and enmity,

and ill-will, need not expect the presence of that Spirit who admonishes, *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.* Those immoderately attached to earthly possessions, and not seeking *first the kingdom of God*, may expect that Spirit will leave them whose influence would lead them to love heavenly things more than earthly. It is the object of the Holy Spirit to lift us above the world. In his sacred visitations he would prepare us for heaven. His influence is exerted to form us for sacred communion with God; for sweet, and habitual, and holy converse with spiritual and eternal things *Things seen and temporal*, occupying and controlling us, shut him out of the heart. With *things unseen and eternal* he would fit us to commune. In sacred sobriety, in wise and holy thoughtfulness, in self-possession and devotion to God and to heavenly interests we must live, if we would *walk in the Spirit*, enjoying his presence, and his power, and his sacred comfortings.

5. If we would be aided in our christian walk by the power of the Spirit, we must be carefully and deeply sensible to his *monitions*. It is not enough that we aim to combat and conquer sin. It is not enough that we attend to the duties of piety, and use the appointed means of grace. It is not enough that we endeavor to resist the fascinations of worldly pleasure, and those temptations which would lead us to lay up our treasures on the earth. There is something beyond this. There is a *still small voice* to which we must lend our attentive ear. Christians are not to be taken to heaven in a path they are unwilling to tread. They are not to expect that God will always so admonish them that nothing but the most hardened impiety and unbelief can resist. Sinai does not always thunder. Calvary does not always quake. Not to every incredulous Thomas will the Saviour say, *Bring hither thy finger and thrust it into my side.* No, far from this. There are monitions of the Spirit most wonderfully gentle, and tender, and still. God speaks to the heart in that small voice which agitates no feeling, troubles no composure, and is only the gentlest indication to the adopted child. Let him hear it, let him heed it. If he will not keep his heart fearfully sensible to the calls of God, his God may be offended and call no more.

As you speak to your children in gentleness, tenderness, lowness,

and solemnity of voice, when you speak to them of the things which most deeply interest your soul; so God the Holy Ghost speaks to you. The Christian is not to be *forced* and driven in his path. God only calls him to it, and leads him in it. He must yield himself to the gentlest influence. Not by violence, but by judgment, by choice, by affection he proceeds in the way to heaven. There are times when the Spirit moves on his heart; and if he remains insensible to his influence, the breathings of the Spirit may be gone, and the soul be left to the poisoned breezes of worldliness and sin! Let Christians become habitually watchful for Divine influence; let them cultivate a sacred sensibility to it; let them be fearful of losing the least influence which the Eternal Sanctifier ever exerts on the mind, on the conscience, or on the softened and sanctified sensibilities of the heart; and I am persuaded they will walk more closely and more sweetly with God;—sin will less trouble them; they will live in the light of heaven; they will have joy in God their Saviour; and then revivals of religion will continue longer;—indeed, I solemnly believe they would never cease.

6. If we would have the aids of the Spirit, we must *seek* them by constant and fervent *prayer*. Divine sovereignty has chosen to connect the benefaction with the petition that seeks it. *Ask, and ye shall receive,* is the promise that encourages prayer. And in reference to no other gift is the promise of God so full, so clear, so broad, as in reference to this. *The Holy Spirit to them* THAT ASK HIM, is the blessed measure of his blessed bounty. The willingness of the father to give bread to the hungry child, is the measure of God's readiness to bestow the Spirit. He gives with the hand and the heart of a father. Here only there is no limit flung around desire. When we pray for any thing else, *submission* must qualify anxiety;—*not as I will, but as thou wilt.* But, praying for the Holy Spirit, IMPORTUNITY is our best submission to God; *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.*

My brethren these are some of the things needful for your securing the presence and the aids of the Divine Spirit in your walk along the way of the christian life. They show you,

1. There is no safety in religious indifference and sloth. Your security, as Christians, countenances no indifference. The best

gifts of heaven are to be sought with a holy fervor and a heavenly appetite.

2. They show you that the excellency of religion, the honor of its Author, and the desirableness of its possession, will be estimated very much as you demean yourselves before the world. Ye *are the temples of the Holy Ghost.* God dwells in you. God acts in you. Your unfaithfulness is his dishonor and the scandal of the cross! What caution, what sanctity, what careful separation from sin, and what reserve for God should mark your daily course!

3. These truths show you the importance of improving those seasons when the evils of sin are felt, and the weakness of the flesh, and worthlessness of the world, and when death and eternity come up as present to your view. They are the seasons when God dwells in his temple. The Holy Ghost is then moving on your hearts, to lead you, by truth, from sin to holiness, and separate you unto God.

4. These truths show you, that there is no offence to God in your being dissatisfied under the absence of his Spirit. He would have you mourn; he would have you seek him by tears, and lamentations, and prayer, and give him no rest till he return. If you feel any longings after God, indulge them, cherish them, and never be satisfied till he comes *to dwell in you, and walk in you, and be your God.* In holy prayer give no limit to yourselves. Launch forth on the ocean of the Divine perfections and promises. Ask any thing that is necessary to holiness. God is as much glorified in giving, as you are blessed in receiving his sanctifying gifts. Heaven is all bounty to the heart longing for its benefactions.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 9. Vol. xv.] SEPTEMBER, 1841. [Whole No. 177.

SERMON CCCVII.

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THE PREACHING OF ANOTHER GOSPEL ACCURSED.

"*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*"—Galatians, 1 : 6–9.

How full are these words of force and solemnity. Let us fix the mind on them until we feel their significancy. Is it a profane blasphemer, who opens his mouth only to pour forth execrations, who has "clothed himself with cursing as with a garment," and whose malignant feelings towards his fellow-man assume the awful form of an appeal to heaven? No; it is one who delighted rather in blessing; and who, cruelly as he was hated by his own nation, requited their enmity only with the most earnest wishes for their salvation, though he were himself accursed to obtain it. Is it the hot haste of a good man speaking unadvisedly, and rather according to the infirmity of the man than the sobriety of the saint? The very form into

which it is cast, and the calm, firm repetition of its tremendous denunciations, stamps it as the language of deliberation. Far from being an outburst of human passion, the language is that of one full of the Holy Ghost, of one selected and sent forth by Christ to be an authoritative teacher of the churches —an inspired apostle. They are not the words of human infirmity, but the utterances of a holy God and a true,—his unerring and "lively oracles." May, then, that Spirit which *spoke* in Paul *harken* in us. The truth here taught us, if awful, is yet a salutary and timely one. We learn,

I. That it is possible to ascertain what the true gospel is ;
II. That the gospel is unchangeable ;
III. And that they who pervert it are accursed.

I. It is possible to acquire certainty as to the true nature of the gospel. Paul's language throughout the epistle implies this. It would have been most unreasonable and most cruel thus to denounce those whose doubts as to the real purport of the gospel were unavoidable and excusable. He makes no exceptions for ignorance, and prejudice, and heedlessness. He needed to make none. He had credentials, such as none of their false teachers brought, that Christ had sent him to preach the gospel. Miracles, prophecies, and the moral results of his preaching, proclaimed him one commissioned of God. As to the doctrines he had taught, they could be left in no doubt. He assumes that the distinction between his own gospel and that of the rival teachers was palpable on the most cursory examination; and that his rudest hearers were competent to perceive the difference between the opposing doctrines, and were bound to make the requisite discrimination. He had spoken clearly and without reserve ; consistently and without variation. He had in Galatia, as every where else, taught that men were sinners and could not be saved by their own good deeds ; but that Christ "*gave himself for us*," (chap. 1 : 4 ;) and having died as the sacrifice, arose as the High Priest ; and that, repenting and believing, men might be justified freely in his righteousness, and accepted through his mediation. He had taught that by nature all inherited and deserved the wrath of God ; but that through Jesus the Holy Spirit was given, producing a change of heart. He had taught that the fruit of the

Spirit thus given would be necessarily holiness of life in each true convert. Christ, the crucified Redeemer, the Holy Spirit, the great renewer and enlightener of the world, were the theme of his familiar converse, his ministrations and his writings. There was no want of certainty, then, as to what he had taught, and what they should believe.

2. But we find men, after excusing themselves for having spent a whole lifetime in a state of spiritual irresolution, or what is rather indifference to all religion, sheltering themselves under the plea, that amid contending systems and warring pulpits they cannot ascertain what the gospel really is. Some, calling themselves Christian teachers, assure them that there is no hell, but that death is to every man the gate of heaven. Others contend that Christ had no inherent deity, and made no propitiatory sacrifice. He was but a wise and good teacher, and if men are saved it is not by his atonement or by any other substitute sacrificed in their stead. Others, again, teach that Christ did indeed die for our salvation, but that it is our own meritorious conduct and character that entitle us to his salvation, or in other words, we are saved by our own righteousness. Amid the teachers who thus stand contending with each other, and contradicting the testimony of the great body of Christians in all ages, these irresolute men profess to be at a loss what sentiments to receive. And sometimes they wish that they had lived in the primitive ages of the church, and could have heard the gospel from the lips of the apostles themselves.

Let such remember, then, that in the apostles' times they would have been subjected to the same perplexity of which they complain in our own. Let them remember, also, that they would then have found relief only from the same sources to which they are directed now. If they are distressed by the many and contradictory teachings of human guides, the Galatians were exposed to the same trial. While the apostles yet lived, the churches they had themselves planted and instructed were visited by those who taught another gospel. Paul had taught a righteousness by faith in Christ that magnified the cross. These false teachers taught a righteousness that was of the law, making void the cross of Christ. In what way were

the Galatians to know the truth? The apostle was not always with them. They had his teachings treasured in their memory, and as recorded in his epistles. They had the teachings of other apostles, and of uninspired teachers known to accord in their doctrines with the inspired and authoritative guides of the church. And they had the Scriptures of the Old Testament. But above all these, they had unimpeded access to God, and the Spirit of God was their counsellor. Under what process of teaching, and in what type of doctrine had they received this Spirit? In that teaching and doctrine let them persevere. That Spirit, sought in prayer, would explain the Scrptures, and guidé rightly and safely. If we are in the providence of God brought into similar conflicts from the opposing dogmas of men, we have the same resort in the Scriptures, and the like refuge in the Spirit of God. The volume gives no uncertain response; the Holy Ghost is no tardy or inefficient instructor.

3. Now is it not the most irrational,—we appeal, my fellow-immortals, to your own consciences,—is it not most irrational to stun and weary your ears with the din of human controversies, while you make no appeal to the original authorities? Are you sincerely in quest of truth? Had you been told of an estate bequeathed you by some distant friend, and one informant spoke of it as small in amount, and another described it as being of great value, and you found yourself involved in a whirlwind of contradictory statements; would you compare and collate the rumors on every side, and form your opinion from them, or appeal at once to the written will and the surrogate? If you were told that your home was in flames, would you go around questioning those who had left the scene as to its origin, and extent, and ravages; or would you not rather cast aside all other engagements, and rush to the rescue of your property and your family, to see with your own eyes, and toil with your own hands? And are salvation, and the soul, and heaven worth so little that they do not require the like personal investigation, the like decisive appeal to the ultimate authorities?

Prophets and apostles, and the Lord of apostles and the Master of the prophets hold in this case but one language. They refer you to the record. "To the law and to the tes-

timony," cried the prophets; if of your teachings—if your teachers speak not according to these, it is because "there is no truth in them." "Search the Scriptures," is the command of Christ; "which are able to make you wise unto salvation," respond the glorious company of the apostles. Do you complain of dulness and weakness of mind? they reply, "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and who upbraideth not:" and a louder and sweeter voice than theirs is heard continuing the strain—"The Spirit shall lead unto all truth;"—while the prophets, catching and re-echoing the invitation thus addressed to weak and erring man, exclaim, "The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein."

Until the Scriptures, therefore, are abrogated, and until the Spirit of God has abdicated his office as teacher of the church, you cannot be at a loss, if disposed, in a candid and docile spirit, to learn what are the real doctrines of the gospel. If a man will not ask that Spirit, indeed, he may have the ablest of human teachings, and bring to the book an intellect of angelic power, and yet the result be but error and darkness. But if he will come in the name of Jesus, imploring the Spirit, idiotcy itself shall not prevent his learning the way of salvation. If he refuses thus to come, and will not study the book of God in God's own appointed way, he is not entitled to complain of uncertainty as to his religious opinions, much less to dogmatize in his scepticism. Let us, in this matter, be honest to our own souls, for death is on his way: a judge is even now at the door, who will not stoop to answer our callings; and wretched then will be the fate of that man, who, with the open Bible before him, and the hovering dove of the Spirit above him, has neglected the one and repelled the other.

Make but the experiment in the temper of a little child, and a certainty, sure and unshaken as the everlasting hills, shall possess your souls, while truth darts in upon the darkened mind, and in the light of God you see light—the uncreated, undeclining glory of God, in the face of his Son. Then shall you know that gospel which Paul preached, and whose promises he is now inheriting.

II. But again, the religion of which we may thus obtain a certain knowledge is *unchangeable* in its character. We hear men, sometimes, in forgetfulness of this character of Christi-

anity, exclaiming, "Shall science and art go on, from day to day altering their forms and extending their boundaries, and religion alone receive and admit no improvement?" If they mean that the language of the Bible may be better understood, and that new researches of the antiquarian and traveller, and new fulfilments of prophecy, may throw new and yet increasing light on the pages of the sacred volume—if they mean only, that in days of higher devotedness, such as the Church is yet to see, there may be a more thorough mastery of the doctrines and a more resplendent exhibition of the morals of Christianity —this no Christian denies; but that the facts of Christianity can be modified, its morality be amended, or its doctrines altered is impossible. Those who suppose it, forget that the gospel is not a *discovery* but a *revelation.*

2. The gospel is not a discovery but a revelation. By a discovery we mean what man's intellect has found out by its own efforts: by a revelation what God's intellect has communicated to man's intellect, and what, if not thus aided, man could not have discovered for himself. The one is the fruit of man's labor, the other the gift of God's grace. Now, what man's intellect has discovered, man's intellect may investigate more thoroughly and understand more perfectly. But what man has learned only from God's disclosures, he can of course understand no further than he finds it on the face of those disclosures. He cannot go up to the original truths themselves upon which God drew, and thus improve on the Divine communications. Some of the disclosures thus made are, from the very necessity of our nature, or from a wise regard to our present interests and duties, imperfect revelations, leaving portions of the subject shrouded in darkness. These imperfect revelations are called mysteries. With the limits set by the Divine mind to his revelations, our investigations must terminate: the attempt to pass beyond these is not only temerity, it is folly and ruin. The adventurer dashes himself to his own destruction against the impassable barriers of the human intellect.

When Columbus found our continent, it was a *discovery.* Where one man had gone, other men might follow, and inquire more fully, and learn more correctly than did the original discoverer, and thus our knowledge of America may be destined to receive daily improvements. But when Paul was rapt into

the third heaven, and saw and heard what it was unlawful to utter, it was a *revelation*. No mortal foot could follow him, to pursue and improve his account. Now, had it been permitted Paul to describe in writing the celestial glories thus unveiled to him, those who wished to understand the nature of that upper world would have but one course left for them to pursue. They must investigate Paul's character for veracity, and the evidences he adduced that the Most High had conferred on him so transcendent a favor as to be admitted to become a visitant there. When they had settled these questions, all that their philosophy could do would be but to explain Paul's language as they found it in his descriptions. They could not hope for further knowledge of the world described, unless God should choose to make a fresh revelation to another Paul. No telescope could read what his vision had left unread—no created wing could bear the student up the pathless skies to investigate what Paul had left untold: no stretch of human sagacity could add to the record as the apostle left it. With the first discoverer of our western world it was different: his account sent back to Europe could be continually amended and enlarged; and the school boy of our times may know more of the new world than did the sagacious navigator who first conjectured and then established its existence.

III. Now, the gospel is strictly a *revelation*. It tells us of a world which we can enter for ourselves only by dying: it tells us of the nature and will of our God what none but he could tell, and of which we can know only as much as he has chosen to tell. As the human intellect did not discover the gospel, so no advancement of the human intellect can amend or alter it: but we have heard and read of men who have dared to say, "Christ came to set up a dispensation; it is now past; it has done service in its day, but its day is now gone by. The gospel needed by our refined and scientific times must be a new dispensation." We shudder at the profanity of the spirit that can vent itself in language of such impious arrogance; for no man may claim to come with a new dispensation, unless he comes heralded by such prophecies as ushered Christ's way, and attended by such miracles as marked the whole course of the Redeemer. We say to the sophists and dreamers who talk thus madly of the perfectibility of human nature, and its need

of a new and amended gospel, "Produce your witnesses; let the winds obey your bidding, and the waves become the fixed and stable pavement of your feet; give eyes to the blind, and call the dead from their tombs; speak, as Christ spoke, the words of Divine wisdom; and read, as did he, the secrets of the heart. Die as Christ died, with the earth heaving beneath, and the heavens darkened above to attest their sympathy with and their subjection to the mighty sufferer. And having done this, you have but half done your misssion: show the niche in ancient prophecy rserved for your coming. When Jesus appeared, he came in the train of a long procession of prophets, who had before witnessed of his coming, and carried the line of their testimony, in unbroken continuity, from Eden up to Calvary. He did, indeed, supersede a former dispensation; but that very dispensation had predicted its own departure and described Christ's advent. Does the present dispensation, that of Christ's gospel, speak of itself as being thus transient and temporary? No, it claims to endure till yon sun shall have forsaken his station: the gospel is an everlasting gospel. Does Moses or does Christ foretell your new gospel? The Bible has else no room for it. Yes, they do foretell it; but it is in the language of Enoch; it is the gospel which the seventh from Adam foretold,—the gospel '*of hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against the Lord*,' and of which the Lord '*when he cometh with ten thousand of his saints*,' shall '*convince the ungodly*.'" Jude, 14: 15. Mad were the builders of Babel, when they would raise the tower, whose foot was on the earth, up to the heavens; but they who would, by human discoveries, build up a new and better gospel, are the builders yet more insane of a Babel yet more impious.

IV. But it will be urged that there have been men of very considerable austerity of morals, and of high pretensions to wisdom, who have taught a gospel very different from Paul's. Were it not uncharitable to condemn them? We will not undertake, for our ourselves, to answer this question. To their own Master they stand or fall; but if their Master have spoken, in his own oracles, in reply to this question, we must not suppress or condemn the response that has been given. By his Spirit, then, in his servant Paul, he has replied, and his

language is, "BUT THOUGH WE, OR AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN, PREACH ANY OTHER GOSPEL UNTO YOU THAN THAT WHICH WE HAVE PREACHED UNTO YOU, LET HIM BE ACCURSED." We are taught in the Scriptures, by men's moral fruits, to judge whether they are true disciples of the true doctrine; but we are not allowed, merely by their fruits, to judge of their doctrine itself. We must bring this to the test of the Scriptures as well; and, if rejected by this test, whatever the comparative excellence of deportment in the teachers, they and their doctrine are disallowed. The apostle puts the case, in favor of a false teacher, into the most authoritative form, surrounding him with the highest splendor of moral character and the most plausible show of a heavenly mission. He imagines his own appearance as the promulgator of a new gospel. Should the convert whom Christ's glory smote down on the highway to Damascus—he who had been in labors more abundant, and in deaths oft, whose were miraculous tongues and miraculous works—should he bring to the Galatian church "another gospel," they were to turn from it and from its teacher without hesitation. He proceeds further: as if to put the decision into the strongest possible form, he imagines a teacher, possessing not merely the imperfect sanctity of erring man, but one invested with the holiness of an angel from heaven. His words do not describe Satan coming up out of the pit, and disguised as an angel of light; but he conceives an event yet more dazzling in its seductions, yet more perplexing and ensnaring to the mind of the learner. Should an angel from heaven, one yet recent from those glorious courts, and with the brightness of its moral splendor and its "beauty of holiness" still clinging about him, venture to sin, and commence his fall by preaching to our race another gospel, let him be accursed.

V. Paul did not think lightly of those benign and blessed spirits that are ministering to the heirs of salvation. They had often appeared to the apostles, and interposed effectually in their behalf. Paul knew their might and wisdom; he admired and emulated their holiness, their zealous obedience, their untiring diligence; but, in comparison with Christ and his truth, Paul loved not even angels. One of these beings had appeared to Peter, sleeping in the inner prison and chained between two soldiers, and rousing him, had led him forth

through guards and barriers to liberty. When Paul was himself on ship-board, sailing towards Rome, an angel of God appeared to him, promising him the preservation of his own life and the lives of all his companions; and the promise was kept: but had Peter's deliverer, on their way after passing through "the iron gate that led into the city," commanded him to preach another gospel than Christ's, Peter would have rebuked his deliverer, and used to the tempter the rebuke he had once received himself from his Master, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Had the ministering Spirit who cheered Paul on his voyage stayed to preach to Paul's fellow-voyagers another gospel, Paul would have denounced the new system as a doctrine of devils: for no angel appearing from heaven could bring for his revelation the force of evidence we have for Christ's revelation, in its countless miracles, its accomplished prophecies, and the moral renovations wrought by its influence. And no angel has been promised those full influences of the Holy Spirit that were assured to the apostles for the benefit of the church. Were it possible, then, for one of these holy beings to fall away and become a preacher of heresy, great as might have been his splendor and wisdom, and his former holiness, Paul, the sinner—Paul, the forgiven persecutor, would have withstood and cursed him. The apostle was but a frail man; his body, like ours, a tabernacle of clay, crushed before the moth; yet, in all his weakness, had he met an angel of the highest rank in heaven, one of those "that excel in strength," returning from a mission like that to Sennacherib's camp, his right hand yet red with the blood of a hundred thousand warriors, and had that angel sought to turn the apostle from the truth as it was in Jesus, Paul would not have feared to denounce him in the name of their common Lord, and dust and ashes would have confounded the archangel.

What cause have we for gratitude that angels have not endeavored thus to subvert our faith. They have, on the contrary, given their constant attestation and subjection to Christ. They with songs announced his birth to the shepherds of Bethlehem. They ministered to him in the wilderness of temptation, and in the sorer agony of Gethsemane. Had he but summoned them, twelve legions had flown to his side; they guarded his tomb, and when it was visited by the weeping disciples,

they testified his resurrection. When he ascended on high, they attended him; and when he shall return to judgment, they will troop around him. Meanwhile the mighty angel seen by John flying through heaven, was not seen denying, but publishing the everlasting gospel; and such is their attachment to our Lord, that every sinner believing in him has angels to rejoice in his conversion, and angels to minister to his onward course, to guard his departing spiris and to reclaim his deserted clay from the sepulchre. Their testimony, then, is ever for Christ: they enforce the witness of apostles, and by all their demeanor they bid man do what they have themselves done at the bidding of the Father—worship the Son; for, "when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." (Heb. 1: 6.) Rejecting that adoration when profferred to themselves, they cheerfully yield it to the Redeemer. He, then, that substitutes another gospel for that of Paul, cannot plead angelic patronage or instruction. They adore where he blasphemes.

If true at all, then the gospel is unmingled and immutable truth: no events can occur, no evidence be adduced authorizing us to modify that system which was given of God, and which God guards, and that, like his Divine Author, claims a perfection that admits neither amendment nor decay, the one unchangeable gospel "WHICH IS NOT ANOTHER."

VI. Those perverting the gospel are accursed, not because fallible man has willed it, but God the Holy Ghost has pronounced the curse; and who may annul and dispute it? The fearful doom is not unmerited. Whatever the external recommendations of any such system, or of its advocates, did their show of excellence equal that of an angel, as yet but in the first hour of his fall, they inherit a fearful curse, because of the crime they commit and the mischief they occasion.

1. Of the greatness of the crime we form but inadequate conceptions, from the blindness produced by our share in the guilt of our race, and also from the faint and remote views we have of God. Yet what arrogance is it, evidently, to alter the teachings of the Unerring and the Omniscient, the Holy One of Israel,—what the fearfulness of the presumption, that would correct infinite wisdom and contradict the God of truth.

There is something most daring and portentious in the ingratitude of the creature that would dictate and prescribe to the Creator who has made him, and the unwearied Benefactor whose sleepless vigilance protects him from destruction, and whose untiring bounty is daily supplying him. And how aggravated the sin of rejecting, on any pretext, the plans and the gifts of that Redeemer who has died for us, and of grieving that Spirit which would have reconciled and sanctified us. And what language can describe the aggravated cruelty of thus counter working God's designs of mercy in the gospel? It is a revelation of grace, in which wrath was to be appeased, that mercy might have its free course over the miseries of a groaning world. They who set aside this gospel, remove or clog the channel of God's mercy, that his vengeance may have its original scope, and roll its consuming deluge over a world of sin. The man who would cut off the supplies of food from his famished fellow-creatures in a besieged town—the wretch who should in wantonness destroy all the remedies provided for a hospital in which crowds were tossing in agony—agony that, unrelieved, must issue in death, but which these remedies could not only relieve but remove—such a destroyer, such a traitor were surely not as cruel as the man who sets aside the true gospel. For the religion of Christ is the food of the soul and the bread of heaven; and the atonement of Christ, as Paul preached it, is the one remedy for the wretchedness and sin of our race, and apart from it there is no salvation for the soul to all eternity.

2. The greatness of the mischief is necessarily incalculable. For all earthly powers must fail to span and to guage that eternity, into which death ushers us, and for which the Gospel is to prepare us. To pervert that Gospel is to aid Satan in thrusting down our race to misery unremitting and unimaginable. What is a conflagation that lays a city in ashes, or a plague sweeping over the breadth of the land,—what is loss of freedom, or reputation, or life, compared with the loss of the soul? And he who sets aside the gospel ruins not one soul but many. "Their world will eat as doth a canker." Error is contagious. The victim of delusion will seek to quiet his conscience, and increase the influence of his system, by swelling the number of proselytes to his party from every side. Who

can calculate the blind, led by the blind, that have already entered the pit, and are now even, rejoicing on their way thither? To have any share in producing such mischief, is to aid in feeding the worm that never dies, and to heap fuel on the flame that is never quenched. May the mercy of God save us from such sin. Better were it to beg crumbs with Lazarus, and sit with Job on the dunghill, than to share riches, honor and power here, on condition of preaching another gospel, and prophesying smooth things, and crying "peace, peace," while God's own voice proclaims, "There is no peace to the wicked."

With these views, then, of the character of the gospel, let us ask ourselves, as in the sight of God, Have we the gospel that Paul preached, or do we receive another? If we receive that which he preached, do we obey it? If it be our hope and guide, let us hold it fast with an unwavering confidence, and defend it by a fearless profession, though man cavil at, or an angel coniradict its testimonies; content with the assurance that what the Scriptures teach and the spirit seals shall stand, though the elements melt with fervent heat, and the heavens pass away as a scroll when it is rolled together.

1. It is evidently the interest and duty of every hearer of the gospel to ascertain that he is receiving that system of truth which the apostles taught. The word of God allows not, nor will his bar acquit those who have trusted indolently in the numbers attached to their sect, or in the wisdom or piety of their teachers, while careless as to their own personal experience of religion, and neglect the earnest study of those Scriptures that are to try every doctrine and judge every spirit. In Paul's time the gospel had its opposers among the Jews who sought after signs, and among the Greeks who looked for wisdom. And men now reject or modify the gospel for the same causes. Should modern systems, therefore demand our faith and claim to supplant the gospel of Paul, either because of the signs and wonders that attest them, and the new revelations they boast to have received, on the one hand, or because of the superior wisdom, refinement and philosophy of those who defend them, on the other hand; we do well to remember that we receive such systems at our peril. And the woe that smites the teachers of these errors, will not spare their followers.

2. Errors in religion are neither rare nor harmless. If even in apostolic times there were not wanting heresies of the most fatal character, we have no reason to expect that they should become less numerous or less fatal, now that the age of miracles is past, and the presence of inspired and infallible teachers is withdrawn. And if, from these varied forms of religious belief, some would infer the harmlessness of error, and teach us that every system, calling itself Christian, has in the main, the great truths necessary to piety here and happiness hereafter, we need but bring their theory to the test of the text before us. The teachers opposing Paul, those at least in Galatia, preached apparently the same God and the same judgment and eternal retribution, as did the apostle; nor is there any evidence that they disputed the divine mission of our Saviour. But there was an entire difference of statement as to the way of salvation. How did Paul act? Did he respect the independence of those who thus differed from him, and assert their essential union with himself in the great matters of the faith? The course that he pursued so resolutely himself, and so impressively urged upon others, was far different. Instead of dwelling on the opinions held in common, as furnishing a sufficient basis for concord, and acknowledging in the truths they yet retained, the basis of a common Christianity, he denounced without compromise or qualification, the opposing doctrine as being "another gospel." For it taught error as to the fundamental truth, the mode of a sinner's acceptance with God.

3. There are truths in religion of such vital importance that departure from them must destroy the soul. The holiness that the gospel came to foster is the effect of truth received in the love of it. And this truth is in its own nature harmonious and one. Truth cannot contradict itself: nor in science or art can there be two opposed and warring truths. So is it also in religion. The singleness of truth constitutes the basis of its exclusiveness. It claims for itself, exclusively and without rival, the faith and obedience of mankind; a claim that is exclusive because it is just, and that could not be consistent without requiring thus the rejection of all error. These exclusive claims are often misrepresented as involving the most odious intolerance and illiberality. But in truth there is no more a possibility of the existence of several true religions,

than there is of the existence of more than one God. From the one Jehovah there can emnaate but the one truth—developed indeed in different degrees at different ages, in Judaism the bud, in Christianity the expanded flower,—but essentially, and in all ages, the one unchanged and unchangeable religion, revealing for man, the sinner, salvation, through an atonement and Mediator of divine appointment. Much of error may be mingled with this truth in various minds; but there are vital errors which the word of God has doomed as the seals of ruin in those who retain them. It recognizes in the church of God one head and one foundation, and those only are acknowledged as the heirs of life who build on this foundation, and "WHO HOLD THE HEAD."

SERMON CCCVIII.

BY REV. WILLIAM HAGUE,
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A VAIN RELIGION.

JAMES, 1: 26.—"*This man's religion is vain.*"

There are probably few or none of you, my hearers, who do not acknowledge in some sense the necessity of religion, who do not feel that the wants of society require it. and that man's very nature makes it indispensable to his happiness. These broad principles are generally professed in this community, and have a powerful influence on mankind at large. Hence we see that men of every nation and of every rank are so generally led to respect religious institutions, and to seek mental repose in some mode of worship or some form of faith. There is, however, an universal danger lest men rest satisfied with any system of belief or any set of ceremonies which give active exercise to the religious sentiment, even though it entirely fail of the great ends of true religion. The chief end of true religion is to lead the soul to God, and thus to sanctify, save, and exalt it. But much that is called religion falls short of this. Much of it has a contrary tendency. Much leads the soul to trust in itself, and inflates it with the pride of self-righteousness. Much of it forsakes God and deifies the reason. Much of it exalts and inaugurates idols in the human heart. Much of it is a form of godliness which palsies the power thereof; and much of it does all the mischief which must follow,

> "When vice turns holy,
> "Puts religion on, assumes the robe pontifical,
> "And with the eye of saintly elevation
> "Blesseth sin."

The apostle, in the text, speaks of a sort of religion which IS VAIN. The instance which he mentions is one in which religion does not affect the conversation, does not "bridle the tongue," nor prevent it from uttering those words which injure others, which inflame evil passions, and betray the evil spirit that lurks within the heart. A man who exhibits such a defective character, may "seem to be religious;" he may be correct in his creed, and fluent in honied speech as well as bitter words, but his religion is vain, for by his

words he shall be judged, by his words condemned. They are opposed to the Christian spirit, and "if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his."

Various are the cases in which it may be said of a man who respects the Christian name, and supports Christian institutions, and attends the Christian sanctuary, and in many respects "seemeth to be religious," that his religion is vain. It is a mere semblance; it deceiveth his heart; it will fail in the day of judgment, and leave his soul hopeless. My friends, may God forbid that at last the pen of eternal truth should write "it is vain" upon the religion of any one of us. In order to guard against so fearful an evil, let me ask you to consider some of the cases in which this will certainly be done.

I. That will be found to be a vain religion, which is a mere development of the religious sentiment natural to man. You are all probably well aware that the history of the world and a sound inductive philosophy establish the fact, that religious veneration is as truly a part of man's nature, as intellect, conscience, or social affection. Like any other faculty or sentiment, it may be stronger in some than in others, yet its existence is universal. Hence it is that religious institutions have always existed in every clime and every condition of our race, and always will exist, either in the form of a pure worship or a baleful superstition. The elements of our nature from which they rise is indestructible; for even infidelity itself is but the reasoning power connected with an evil heart of unbelief, aiming its blows at the absurdities which superstition has engendered under the name of religion; and while it seeks to avoid THEM, as well as the moral restraints of Christianity, by endeavoring to extirpate the religious sentiment itself, its efforts only prove that this inherent sentiment can never be destroyed. The truth of this seems to have made a strong impression on the mind of Napoleon Bonaparte, for he once observed in conversation, that while walking alone one evening, the sound of a church-bell fell upon his ear. Finding him in a genial mood, it seems to have awakened in his breast the most touching recollections of his childhood, and filled his soul with devotional feeling. "I was profoundly affected," says he, "such is the power of early habits and associations; and I considered if such was the case with me, what must not be the effect of such recollections upon the more simple and credulous vulgar. Let your philosophers answer that. The people must have a religion."

This truth, that "the people must have a religion," has been well understood by the kings and statesmen of the earth. Hence it is that they have ever been so ready from motives of worldly policy to establish that form of religion which they deemed most popular, so that by an alliance between the throne and the altar they might the better maintain their own power. But what we would here particularly observe is, that this religious sentiment may exist in sincerity and strength in the bosom of fallen man, without being at all connected with moral virtue, or aught that is acceptable to God. It may exist equally in the citizen and the savage, in the bad and the good, in the best and the worst of men. It was this which led the ancient mariners of Tarshish, when overtaken by a tempest, to cry to their idol gods for help. It was this which prompted the pagan Indians of America to offer up their daily worship. It is this which leads the Italian bandit to carry a pistol in one hand and a rosary in the other. It is this which induces those amongst all nations who pander to the vilest vices, to seek an interest in the prayers of the priesthood. It was this which once led some Greek pirates whose hands were red with the blood of the slain, to recoil with horror from a well-furnished table which they found in a captured vessel, when reminded by their captain that it was a fast-day of their church. It was this which constrained a robber on the high seas, some time ago, to pay respect to an American commander, in whose cabin he saw conspicuous a large quarto Bible. Wide as the world, and indestructible as humanity itself, is this powerful sentiment, which, though it exist in alliance with sin, points to God as the proper object of worship, and shows what man was designed to be originally, what he ought to be, and from what a height he has fallen.

Now if it be true that this natural sentiment exerts such a wonderful sway over the most wicked of our race, we can easily see that it must have a mighty influence over those whose morals have been cultivated, and whose sensibilities have been quickened by the teachings of Christianity. Surrounded by the lights of knowledge and a well ordered state of society, they have the same essential nature as the less favored portions of mankind. And if among the latter class, the religious sentiment is found in all its strength unconnected with any thing holy or pleasing to God, it may be so among the former, though developed in different modes. It may lead one to some outward act which superstition prescribes, and another to some act of a reasonable service prescribed by

Divine authority, and yet to either it may be said, one thing thou lackest, without which thy religion is vain.

This is a far-reaching truth. It ought to be borne in mind by us in our self-examinations. I think of it on various occasions. I think of it when I see persons affected with religious emotions. I think of it amidst scenes of religious revivals, and am led to ask, has this awakening been produced, or has its character really been modified, by a clear perception of the truths of the Bible? I think of it on entering an inquiry room, and there beholding those whose sensibilities are aroused, and who, following some new impulse, have come to ask, "What shall we do?" I think of it in scrutinizing my own religious history, while I ponder the question, have I any inward experience which is something more than the stirrings of a natural sentiment,—something which proves the presence of the regenerating Spirit, and bears the seal of his workmanship? It becomes us all to think of it, and to see whether all we know about religion can be traced to this great spring of action; for if it can be, then we know nothing in reality of that state of which Paul spake when he said, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away and all things are become new;" of which Christ urged the necessity when he declared, "Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

II That religion is vain which consists in the cultivation of mere natural goodness. To show this, I am not now about to insist on those passages of Scripture which teach the doctrine of human depravity, which assert that all have "gone astray, that there is none that doeth good—no not one." Many there are who, when they hear these declarations applied universally, seem to imagine that the Scripture doctrine, as we hold it, confounds all distinction between what is amiable and what is unlovely, between decorum and dishonor, between the just and the unjust in our social relations. But this is far from being true, for the religion of the gospel includes the social virtues; it only discards the idea that these may be SUBSTITUTED for all that God in the first table of the law demands of us. I would by no means deny that in popular language and in various connections it may be justly said that natural goodness pertains to man, but with my eye upon the Bible, I would by all means deny that he has any natural goodness which can save him. Let us seek distinctness in our use of terms. You apply the term GOOD to any object in nature or art which was made for a right or useful end, and which answers the purpose of its formation. A

good house is one which protects you from heat and cold, and which is conformed to your ideas of beauty or of comfort. A good ship is one whose capacity and fleetness combined answers the end of the merchant in her structure. A good painting is one which by a just and happy combination of color, light and shade, gives forth a strong and natural expression of character. In view of a particular relation, you apply the term GOOD to any human being whose conduct is conformed to the design of that relation. Thus you speak of a good neighbor, a good citizen, a good parent, or a good child; but what do we mean strictly, when we speak of a GOOD MAN? That depends upon our idea of the true end for which man was made. And what end was that? In answering this question, the wisdom of the world looks not beyond the world, but heavenly wisdom regards man's spiritual nature, his high capacity to know, love, adore and obey God, and declares that "the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever." By the light of this principle, can he be regarded as truly a good man who habitually forgets God, prefers the friendship of the world to his, breaks his law, then slights the pardon "bought with mercy's proper blood," delights not in the study of his word, in prayer or praise, and lives for earthly interests and relationships rather than those which pertain to God and eternity? No, that cannot be. He may have an all-absorbing interest in honoring the relations which are temporal, without one spark of love to God; and without that his religion is a "vain show," a "sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal," a meteor gleam which will expire at the valley and the shadow of death, and leave him involved in a starless, hopeless, endless night.

III. That man's religion is vain which leads him to trust in the efficacy of mere repentance to save him. The Scriptures do undoubtedly speak of repentance as essential to salvation. So, too, do they speak of the spirit of obedience; but they no where imply that either the one or the other is, or can be, the ground of our justification in the sight of God. On the other hand, they assert that our salvation is not of works lest any man should boast, and not only that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified, but to those whom he had already addressed as penitents the apostle declares, that if Christ had not risen from the dead, they were YET IN THEIR SINS.

Touching this important point, however, it has been asserted by a theological writer, that "repentance, genuine and effectual repent-

ance, secures the Divine favor by a NECESSARY ACTION. But he whom God regards with favor cannot carry about with him a load of unforgiven sin. The supposition that the death of Christ was necessary as a means of procuring pardon for the penitent is therefore gratuitous, and founded on a misapprehension of the nature of forgiveness." Again, it is remarked of the Divine government, "by accepting the obedience of the contrite offender, it accomplishes its end, verifies its purpose; the law is made honorable by the fidelity of its requisition, and the welfare of those for whom the government was constructed, is secured as it could be in no other way. The forgiveness of the sinner upon his repentance, upholds the authority and promotes the end of the Divine government."

Now, if there was no such thing as a revelation from heaven—if the Great Teacher had never come with a message from the Father to man, all this might have seemed as reasonable for aught we could tell, as anything else which human wisdom could suggest. From the lips of Socrates it might have seemed graceful; yet he, very sensible of the dimness of nature's light, modestly expressed his doubts about the conditions of salvation. But then the great aim of the Gospel is not only to teach us that there is a Saviour, but, also our need of one; and to do this it shows us that the law of God, which, reaching to the heart, demands supreme love for him as the main-spring of action, can be satisfied with nothing short of a perfect obedience; and that if we have failed in that, to present to God the imperfect work of our own repentance as a substitute is to bring a "vain oblation." For—overlooking the ill-desert of all past sin, in view of which, the Gospel, as it meets the sinner, tells him that he is condemned already—repentance, it is obvious, does not secure to the law a perfect obedience for the future. It leaves the sinner "with a law in his members, warring against the law in his mind," even though his conscience consent unto the law of God that it is good. The more enlightened and holy he becomes the more clearly he discerns those secret faults and sad defects which call for a fresh repentance, so that he is forced to say, as did one of old, with stronger and stronger emphasis, "who can tell how often he offendeth?" "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean;" purify my soul with the blood of a Divine atonement.

If, then, the law of God requires a perfect obedience, and the repenting sinner is still very imperfect, how can he be justified and saved by the necessary action of repentance? It is impossible. A hope of salvation, based on the natural effect of repentance, is ut-

terly vain, and must leave the soul without support in the trying hour, unless it can be shown, that although repentance have no such necessary action on the government of God, yet he has promised to forgive sins simply on account of it. But to say that God has promised this, would be to contradict all those testimonies which assert pardon to be indispensably connected with faith in the atoning Saviour. Among the last words which Christ uttered on earth, was the message, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;" and when his apostle afterwards wrote, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," it was no more than what Christ himself had taught, when he said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

A partial and defective view of the plan of salvation may be fatal to any man, and in no case is it more needful to remember that maxim of Christ, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." This rule is violated by those who, in teaching their doctrine of forgiveness, quote some passage which insists on the necessity of repentance, and then assert that repentance will of itself reconcile us to God, without any faith in the atonement of Christ. As well might a reader, in view of Paul's declaration, "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," infer that the apostle thought that a sinner could be saved without repentance, or any good works at all. Sometimes repentance is mentioned alone, and sometimes faith alone, and at other times hope alone; (Rom. 8: 24;) but according to the true idea of a saving conversion, one cannot exist without the rest. Even under the old economy, when the prophet lifted up his voice and cried, "If the wicked man turn from his wickedness he shall surely live," the people knew that no repentance would be accounted genuine which did not lead the penitent to bring his sacrifice to the altar—to offer there the propitiation which God had appointed as the symbol of a better sacrifice, which was to be revealed in the "fulness of time." The feelings of the true penitent could find repose only in such a faith, and hence we cannot but see the justness of the remark of Bishop Butler, that "though the efficacy of repentance alone to prevent what mankind had rendered themselves obnoxious to, and recover what they had forfeited, is now insisted on in opposition to Christianity, yet, by the general prevalence of propitiatory sacrifices over the heathen world, this notion of repentance alone being sufficient to expiate guilt, appears to be contrary to the general sense

of mankind." How clearly then, does this great doctrine of the gospel find its echo in the bosom of humanity! Far and widely throughout the earth, in lands illumined by revelation or covered with pagan darkness, we find the idea of propitiation enshrined in all the splendor of ritual worship; and at whatever point we commence the investigation of its origin, history or tradition traces it up to that spot where the second father of mankind, saved from the flood which overwhelmed his race, erected his altar and offered his sacrifice in the exercise of a pure and acceptable faith; and thus we see, that while the word of inspiration declares to an apostate world its need of the atonement of Christ in order to receive the pardon of sin, the voice of every nation and every age gives back a deep and solemn response to the truth of the Spirit's testimony.

IV. That is a vain religion which does not induce a practical submission to the authority of God. The history of the world shows that, ever since the fall of man, much effort has been made to institute religions which treated the authority of God very lightly. Even in Eden, the tempter would fain persuade our first parents that they could be religious, notwithstanding their disobedience; "Ye shall not surely die," said he, "but your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods." The eating of the fruit of a certain tree seemed to be a small thing in itself, but when made the test of submission to God's authority, what a train of momentous consequences followed!

And ever since that day, the controversy between all true and all false religion has turned on a question which involved the principle of obedience to God's authority. This has marked the difference between the really converted and the unconverted. We see this developed in the family of Adam. It was the obedience of faith which distinguished the character of Abel from that of Cain; for notwithstanding Cain's transgressions, he seemed to be religious, inasmuch as he brought his offering to the altar. This principle was inculcated on the antediluvians, and by them rejected, for they walked in the way of their own heart. It was inculcated on the descendants of Noah and rejected, for by them idolatry was spread through the world. It was inculcated on the seed of Abraham, and often rejected, for how sadly at times did they prove themselves to be a recreant race, who "feared the Lord and served their own gods." And even within the pale of Christendom, how many have taken upon them the name of Christ, while they have rejected those very doctrines whose main support is his authority. How many have treated with reverence the outward forms of service; have

been punctilious in observing days, months, times, years, feasts, fasts and oblations; have been ever zealous in doctrinal controversy while they have neglected Christ's moral precepts, and yet have called their religion "practical christianity!" How many have agreed to obey his moral precepts as far as they seemed to be reasonable, while they have treated his doctrines and institutions with indifference, and yet have called theirs a "rational religion!"

Oh! it is of little moment whether a man happen to agree with Jesus Christ in one point or many, so long as he refuses to receive any thing on the simple authority of Christ. HE IS NOT A CHRISTIAN; his religion is fatally defective. The impress of the spirit of grace is not on his character. The regenerate on earth cannot own him as one of them; and the cherubim and seraphim on high, who, while they soar, yet veil their faces with their wings, and bow before the Saviour in meek humility, could hold no fellowship with such a spirit. My hearers, let us beware of calling Jesus, "Lord, Lord," while we believe not all his words, and do not the things which he has commanded; for Christianity is a religion of love, and this is the love of God, that we believe on him whom he hath sent, and keep his commandments; for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, nor birth, nor blood, nor rank, nor place, nor learning, nor accomplishments, but faith which worketh by love, and the keeping of the commandments of God.

And now how important is the question, Have I true religion? Have I a religion which is something more than the mere development of a natural sentiment, something more than the cultivation of natural goodness, something more than a reliance on the natural effect of repentance, and one which involves a supreme regard to the authority of Christ? Have I a heaven-taught religion, the religion of the Bible, which commences with conviction of sin, issues in regeneration, and is to be consummated at last in the perfection of holiness? Have I the RELIGION OF FAITH taught by Christ, preached by the apostles, exemplified by the primitive church, and attested by the whole company of martyrs; a religion which wounds but to heal, which humbles yet exalts, condemns yet saves? Have I a religion which unites me to the Saviour, which leads me to derive from his fulness "grace for grace," light, peace and joy, and to grow up unto him in all things, who is the Head? If so, then I know that I have not a vain religion, but an eternal vital reality, the religion of the spiritual Church on earth, and the religion of heaven, where I shall see Jesus as he is, and be like him, and rejoice before him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But, ah me! if I have not this, then my religion is vain; "for," saith the Lord, "he that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it, and the ruin of that house was great."

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 10. Vol. XV.) OCTOBER, 1841. (Whole No. 178.

SERMON CCCIX.

DELIVERED IN PHILADELPHIA, SEPT. 8, 1841, BEFORE THE AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS,

By JUSTIN EDWARDS, D. D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, ANDOVER, MASS.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD THE BUILDER OF HIS SPIRITUAL TEMPLE.

"*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.*"—Zechariah iv. 6.

This was spoken by the angel of the Lord, concerning the building of the second temple. It is the explanation of a vision, which was seen by the prophet Zechariah, the object of which was, to show him, and through him, to make known to the people, a truth, which it was of great importance that they should clearly understand, and deeply feel; viz. that while they must, themselves, make strenuous and persevering exertions, to build the temple; their dependence for success must be placed, not upon themselves, or upon creatures, but upon the Spirit of the Lord. This is a truth of universal application, with regard to every good work; and of fundamental importance to all people. For this reason, God takes a variety of ways to make it known, and to impress it upon the hearts of men. And for this same reason, I invite your attention to it at this time.

The angel of the Lord came to the prophet, and awaked him, as a man is awakened out of his sleep, and said to him, What seest thou? He looked, and lo, a candlestick, all of gold; with a bowl upon the top of it, and seven lamps thereon. He saw also, two olive trees, one on each side; and two olive branches, one from each tree, hanging over the bowl. These branches were emptying oil out of themselves, into the bowl. And from this bowl, it was carried, by seven pipes,

to the seven lamps, which were burning, with distinguished lustre, upon the top of the candlestick. *Here was an emblem of the reality, the necessity, and the consistency of Divine and human agency, in the furnishing of the light of life, to this dark and ruined world.*

The prophet, not understanding the meaning of the vision, was astonished; and said, What are these, my Lord? The angel answered, Knowest thou not what these be? He said, No, my Lord. Then the angel answered and said: This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, who was at this time Prince of Judah, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

As these lamps which you see, are supplied with oil, and kept constantly burning, not by the agency of man, but of God, so the temple shall be built, and the nation established, and made prosperous and happy, not by human might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. He shall operate on the heart of the king of Persia, and incline him to favor you; on the hearts of your enemies, and keep them at a distance; on the hearts of the people, and excite them to the work; to undertake it with resolution, and to prosecute it with diligence, amidst all the difficulties which they may be called to encounter, until it shall be completed. All this shall be done, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. Yet, in the accomplishment of this work, there must be might and power. Human might and power, with great skill and perseverance, must be exerted, or the work will not be done. Olive trees will not grow, bear fruit, and produce oil, in such a manner as to give light, without human effort. Candlesticks and lamps, bowls to receive oil, and pipes to convey it to the proper places, are not made without hands; and hands under the guidance of sound heads and hearts; dependent, indeed, upon God, but voluntarily employed in the accomplishment of that, which is represented in the Bible, and represented truly, as done by the Lord. This unfolds a principle of vast importance to all men. Notwithstanding their dependence on God, which is real, entire, and universal, what their hands find to do, they must do; and with *their* might. That might which God has given them, and for this purpose, must be voluntarily and perseveringly exerted, in accordance with certain laws, which he has established; or his Almighty power will not be exerted in their behalf. It is true, and it ought deeply to be felt, that, except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. And it is equally true, and it ought as deeply to be felt, that except men labor, according to his appointment, vain are their expectations, that he will ever build it. For he will not exert his power, except in his way. And to experience the benefit of that power, men must take that way. His promised operations were not designed, and when correctly understood, are not adapted to supersede their efforts, but to awaken them; to give them new energy; and to crown them with glorious success. And this is an aspect of Divine operations, which should never be lost sight of; that which awakens attention, and which excites to effort, in dependence on him, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things.

This was the aspect in which the subject was presented to the mind of the prophet, and this the aspect in which he presented it to the minds of the people. And so they understood it. No sooner were they told that the Spirit of the Lord was to be the builder of the temple, than they ascended the hills and the mountains, collected their materials, brought them on to the spot, and according to laws by which God operates in such matters, fitted them for their places, and put them together. Had they not done this, they might in words have acknowledged their dependence, and waited and prayed, and prayed and waited for the Lord, or rather against him, all their lives, and not even the foundation of their temple have been laid. Why not? Was it not the temple of the Lord? and had he not promised that it should be built? and that *he* would be the builder? And had he not decreed that this should be done, and thus shown that it was certain? Yes, it was the temple of the Lord. He had declared that it should be built, and that he would be the builder. He had decreed this should be done, and made known that decree; and thus showed to the universe, that its accomplishment was certain.

But it was not his house in any such sense, that he would build it, without them. He had not promised, or decreed any such thing; but the contrary. He had indeed said, that it should be built; not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit; and this was true. But it was not true in that sense, which those men put upon his words, who would not work, and gave his declarations as an excuse for their neglect: who said that they had nothing to do, or that there was nothing which they could do; and of course, did nothing. But it was true in that other sense, in which God meant it; and in which those understood it, who were awakened by it, to inquire, each one for himself, Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do? and who, as God showed them their duty, were ready, in dependence on him, to do it. And who, in this way, caused their temple to rise, and who continued their exertions, without becoming weary, till they saw it complete. And then, as a confirmation of God's truth, and a public testimony to their faith in it, brought forth the head-stone thereof, with shoutings, crying, GRACE, GRACE, UNTO IT.

Nor will the most deep and permanent conviction of *entire* dependence for every right view, thought, feeling, word, and action, do *such persons* any hurt. It will always do them *great* good. It will arouse them to great effort, secure untiring perseverance, and prepare them for great success. Nor will it be difficult for *such* persons to see, or to *feel*, the perfect consistency between entire and absolute dependence on God, and perfect human freedom and accountability. That most difficult problem, which never has been, and never can be, *rightly* solved, by those who stand "all the day idle," even though they say, "I go, sir," and yet go not, *these* men will *work out*, to a perfect demonstration. They will work out, instrumentally, not only their own salvation, but the salvation also of their fellow men; while God works in them, both to will and to do, all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that faith which comes

by hearing, is the gift of God, of his own operation, and which works by love, purifies the heart, and by which, in every generation, such men have wrought righteousness, obtained promises, out of weakness been made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and overcome the world, the flesh, and devil, and come off conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him that loved them and gave himself for them.

And the history of their labors, conflicts and triumphs, is recorded, that we may be followers of them, who, through faith and patience, and, often, through much tribulation, are now inheriting the promises. Not that we should call any man, master; or follow him farther than he follows Christ, who alone is our Master; and in the doing of whose will, *we* may know for ourselves the truth of God.

And this knowledge which is thus gained, by being *wrought* out, is heaven wide in its influence, from that which is ever gained by being only *thought* out. The one may be done in the cloister, and the man remain there till he dies. The other will carry him who has it to the high places of the field, and engage him in conflicts, not with flesh and blood only, but with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, and with spiritual wickedness in high places. And it will not suffer him to put off his armor, till he puts on his crown. And it will then lead him to proclaim, what he feels, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the glory;" and with the builders who brought forth the head-stone with shoutings, to cry, "GRACE, GRACE, UNTO IT."

That temple which was built at Jerusalem, was a striking type of the spiritual temple which God has long been building, and which will be completed at the last day. Of this temple, the apostle speaks in his Epistle to the Ephesians. In whom, speaking of Christ, he says, all the building, fitly framed together, groweth up, unto an *holy temple* in the Lord.

This temple is the Church; that holy spiritual building, which is founded upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. It is to be composed of all true believers, who shall ever have lived, from the first morning of creation, to the last moment of time. They may not belong to the same denomination; or spend life on the same side of the wall which they have set up; but if they believe on the Son of God, and are so joined to him, as to be "one spirit," they shall form a part of his spiritual temple. Europeans, Asiatics, Africans, Indians; all, of every age, and color, and kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue, who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, shall thus be builded together, for an eternal habitation of God, through the Spirit.

The building of this temple is, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. This appears from the greatness of the work which it was necessary to perform in order to lay the foundation; from the foundation itself; from the materials out of which the temple is to be made; and from the object, for which it is to be erected.

I. From the greatness of the work which it was necessary to perform, in order to lay the foundation, it appears, that the Spirit of the

Lord must be the builder of this spiritual temple. It was a work which none but God himself could perform. Nor could even he do it, in the wisest and best way, though he was almighty, and had all creation at his disposal, in less than four thousand years. The physical creation he could complete, and in the wisest and best way, in a single week. He had only to speak, and it was done; to command, and it stood fast. But to prepare the way, even to lay the foundation, of this eternal habitation for himself, he must operate throughout the kingdoms of nature, providence, and grace, for thousands, and thousands of years. And this not merely through the instrumentality of creatures, but he must make bare his own arm, and travel, for ages, in the greatness of his strength. Nor is this all, but, he who was in the beginning with God, and was God, must himself leave the glory which he had before the creation, take upon him the form of a servant, and labor, even unto death, the death of the cross.

And as under its awful, crushing weight, he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost, the sun turned away, the rocks broke asunder, and the dead started from their graves, to adore him that liveth, but *was* dead, that *they* might live for evermore.

And must *he* who was in the beginning with God, make bare his arm, and travel for ages in the greatness of his strength, and even give up life itself, to lay the foundation? What other arm, and what other strength, but that which is divine, can rear the superstructure? Surely, it must be done, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. This appears,

II. From the foundation itself. This foundation is the Son of God; the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily. By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth; visible, and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him. He was before all things, and by him all things consist; and he is over all, God blessed forever. To him the Father saith, and he knows, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old, as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty.

Such is the foundation of this temple, *God manifest in the flesh*. Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. And other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ, the true God, and eternal life. The value of this foundation never can be known by any, except those who are builded, and are building upon it. And it cannot be fully known even by them, unless they can know the greatness, extent, and duration of that misery, into which this founda-

tion keeps them from falling; and also the greatness, extent, and duration of that glory to which they will be raised, in consequence of building upon it.

Redeemed sinners, you who are builded together on this foundation, for an habitation of God, through the Spirit, you know something of its worth; but nothing to what you will know, when you have tried it for eternity. It exceeds in value all the treasures of creation; in excellence equals the glory of Jehovah; and for stability, is like the pillars of the universe. That he must be the builder, is evident,

III. From the *materials* out of which the temple is to be made. These, as they are in their natural state, universally; and as they would be, without the Spirit and grace of God, eternally, are described by him, as walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom, we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh; fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. Does any one say, this is not my condition? I ask him, why? Had he been without the light of revelation, and without the Spirit and grace of God, would it not have been his condition? Look abroad upon the millions who are now in that condition; and is he naturally better than they? No; in nowise. It has been proved by the testimony of God, and by facts, concerning both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; and are even, naturally, dead in trespasses and sin.

And who can take these materials and make them alive, and fill them with love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, and temperance; but he who spake, and it was done; who commanded, and it stood fast? Can you do it? Can any man do it? Let him make the experiment. And to make it under the most favorable circumstances, let him be a parent, and try it upon his own child. Let him renounce all dependence on God, and the influences of his Spirit, and then, take that child, who is now an enemy to his Maker, and if he can, create him anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, and cause him to glow like a seraph in the Divine service. No, not an Infidel parent on earth can do this; and not a Christian parent will dare to attempt it. All the dedications of children to God, in baptism; all the prayers and tears of pious parents while wrestling with God for their salvation, are a standing testimony, that the work must be done, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God. Even children, to be alive unto God, must be born again; not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Does any one still doubt? let him try the experiment upon *himself*. Let him openly and heartily renounce all dependence on God, and the influences of his Spirit; and by his own unaided efforts, transform himself into the Divine image; that as he has borne the image of the earthly, he shall bear the image of the heavenly; that as he has yielded his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, he shall yield them as instruments of righteousness unto God;

having put off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; become renewed in the spirit of his mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, so that he shall live, not unto himself, but unto him who died for him and rose again.

Has any one ever done this, of himself merely, by his own unaided wisdom, righteousness, and strength, without the spirit and grace of God? Who is he? When, or where? Go through creation, and ask every soul, that has passed from death unto life, Who made you to differ? And how were you saved? And they will all answer, "By grace were we saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it was the gift of God. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, has made us alive together with Christ. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works." And, "by the grace of God," each one would say, "I am, what I am."

And if no one ever has been thus changed, without the Spirit and grace of God, what evidence is there that any one ever will be? Do you say, the power, which, as a free moral agent, each man possesses? and the command of God to him, to make him a new heart? But has any one any more power than other men have had? And if their power did not avail them, without the Spirit of God, what evidence is there, what evidence can there be, that yours, without this Divine agent, will ever avail you? or the unaided power merely, of any other man, ever avail him? None: absolutely none. All the evidence of facts, and of the Divine testimony, is on the other side.

To make power availabie to any good work, let it be remembered, there must be, not power merely, but also a disposition to use it for that end. And whatever be the power of man as a free moral agent, and he has enough to sustain the responsibilities of endless retribution, and to make it his reasonable service, to do all that God requires; yet it is certain, that he will never, without the Spirit and grace of God, so use it as to make himself a new heart, to love God, hate sin, and delight in holiness; or be even instrumental in leading others to do this *immediate* and indispensable duty. Though God himself, from the throne of his excellent glory, calls after him, saying, "turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" and beseeches him by the the tears and blood of a Savior, to turn and live; yet, with all his power, be it what it may, without the grace of God, he will never obey him.

And yet, this must be done, and by multitudes which no man can number; out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue. Who will ever cause them to do it? but he who said, "Let there be light, and there was light." He must shine into their hearts, and give them the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ; or they will not turn from darkness to light, or become light in the Lord. He must write this law upon their hearts, and imprint it upon their inward parts, or they will never be fitted for that temple; from

every part of which is to blaze in living characters, HOLINESS *unto the Lord* forever. That he must be the builder of this glorious edifice, is, if possible, still more plain,

IV. From the object, for which it is to be erected. What that object is, we are told by the Apostle, in the second and third chapters of his Epistle to the Ephesians: viz. *That, in the ages to come, God might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in kindness toward us through Jesus Christ. And to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent, that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, this spiritual temple, the manifold wisdom of God.*

Here then, is the object for which this spiritual temple is to be erected. It is in ages to come, to show angels, principalities, and powers, in heavenly places, *the manifold wisdom of God; and the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward men, through Jesus Christ:* an object which is infinite; and which, as it unfolds with ever increasing brightness, will call forth, from multitudes which no man can number, in louder and louder strains, Alleluias to God and the Lamb, forever and ever. Who can accomplish this, but God himself? Can an angel do it? Can a superangelic creature? Can any creature, however exalted, show, by *his* productions, the manifold wisdom of God? Can he, in ages to come, show to angels, and principalities, and powers in heavenly places, the exceeding riches of God's grace, in kindness toward men, through Jesus Christ? It is higher than heaven, what can he know? deeper than hell, what can he do? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. No man, or angel, or superangelic creature, can conceive a thousandth part of the riches of that grace which, at such a sacrifice, has opened an eternity of bliss to a world infinitely undeserving. But suppose he could conceive, and could display all the riches of that grace, he could not be the builder of this temple: for Jehovah will not give his glory to another. And the object of this temple, is, not that any creature may display, but that God may display the exceeding riches of his grace, and his manifold wisdom. Of course no creature can build it. For no creature can display wisdom which he does not possess; and no building can display more wisdom than is possessed by the builder. But this building is to display more, infinitely more, than is possessed by all creatures in the universe. It is to display not merely the wisdom, but the manifold wisdom of God; wisdom as much greater than the wisdom of all creatures, as he is greater than they. Let them all collect all which they possess, or ever will to eternal ages, and put it into one common stock, and it is still as much less than his, as the thing made is less than God who made it. And as this temple is, in ages to come, to display to angels, and principalities, and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God, and the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward men through Jesus Christ, it is settled, forever,

that no creature can build it. *From the greatness of the work which it was necessary to perform to lay the foundation—from the foundation itself—from the materials, out of which the temple is to be made—and from the object for which it is to be erected—it is perfectly evident that it must be built, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts.*

Some remarks will close this discourse.

1. If the Spirit of the Lord is the builder of this temple, no one will ever become a part of it, without being prepared for it by him. Let the best human soul that ever existed, in apostate man, be cultivated and improved, if it could be, for ages; without experiencing that change which the Bible calls, being "born of the Spirit," it would never be prepared for this spiritual temple. It would have no moral likeness to the foundation; nor would it be resting upon it. It would not coalesce with the other parts of the temple, nor would it have any fitness to be a habitation of God. On this point, there is a great difference of opinion among men. Some suppose, that they have no need to be born of the Spirit, to be created anew, or to pass from death unto life. They do not believe, that, when Jesus died for all, all were dead; or that they must be made alive by the power of God. Not feeling that they have destroyed themselves, they do not feel that in God alone is their help. Nor do they look to him, as the Lord their righteousness. Nor does he become the end of the law for righteousness, to them, as he is to those that believe. Nor have they that hope in him, which purifies them as he is pure; nor is he unto them wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own, they do not submit to the righteousness of God. Nor do they live by faith in him that loved them, and gave himself for them. They never glory in his cross, nor are they by it, crucified to the world, or the world to them.

Other persons there are, who, by an unction from the Holy One, *know*, that they must be born of God; that that, which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that except they be born of the Spirit, they cannot see the kingdom of God.

These two kinds of materials, may appear to men, in this distant world, and while looking through a glass darkly, to be somewhat alike. But when brought to the place where the temple is to stand, and viewed by the great Master-builder, in the blazing light of eternity, they will be found to be altogether different. The very best which have been prepared by men, or creatures merely, instead of being found in the image of God, and fitted, with the rest of the temple, to reflect the lustre of his glory, to every part of the universe, will be fitted only to be cast away from his presence, and from the glory of his power. And as all time for preparation will then be ended, they that are filthy will be filthy still; and all hope of their ever becoming a part of this glorious temple, will vanish as a dream, when one awaketh.

2. As the Spirit of the Lord is the builder of this temple, his materials will all be perfectly prepared. However unsightly, or dark, or

distant, and totally unfit to form a part of such an edifice, he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, will shine down, not only upon them, and around them, but *into* them, and will so give them the light of the knowledge of his glory. And they shall not only see light, but themselves become light, in the Lord. However defective, or even opposite they were before, to all that is requisite for such a building, on such a foundation, and for such a purpose, he who made them will so have mercy upon them, and he who formed them show them such favor, as to transform them into his own image, and cause them to shine in the beauty of holiness. And having begun this good work in them, he will carry it onward, till he shall present them spotless and faultless before the throne of his glory, with exceeding and everlasting joy. And though of every age and nation, he will have made them, in his providence, and by his grace, so perfectly like the foundation, and like the rest of the temple, and so perfectly fitted each one for his place, that when brought to the spot where the temple is to stand, no sound of any instrument will be heard in building. But all the materials, from all parts of the earth, will come together, as by their own attraction, and their union will be perfect and eternal.

3. As the Spirit of the Lord is the builder of this temple, any individual to whom he is made known, and who is in a state of probation, may himself become a part of it. Wherever he may live, and under whatever circumstances he may be placed; however long he may have been in rebellion against God, and however deeply he may have sunk in degradation and guilt; he may nevertheless be transformed into the Divine image, and live. Though his sins were as scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they were red like crimson, they may become as wool. From all his filthiness and his idols, God may cleanse him; a new heart he may give him, and a new spirit put within him; may take away the heart of stone, and give him a heart of flesh. He has done this for thousands. He is now doing it for thousands more. And he will do it for ten thousand times ten thousand, multitudes which no man can number. The time cometh, and *now is*, when the *dead* shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped; the lame man shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. And they shall return and come home to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the city and temple of God—the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

4. As the Spirit of the Lord is the builder of this temple, we see what each one must do, in order to be prepared for it. He must become acquainted with the Holy Spirit, and must look to him for what he needs. He must attend to his communications, must understand, believe, and obey them. They will thus be spirit and life to his soul. He will be begotten again, not by corruptible seed, but by incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. To this word each soul must himself give heed, as to a light shining in a dark place, till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in his heart. He must treat this word, in his feelings and conduct, not as the word

of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which is able to save the soul. And he must be not a hearer only, but a *doer* of the word; and he will then find it to be perfect, converting the soul; and sure, making wise the simple; right, rejoicing the heart; pure, enlightening the eyes; clean, enduring forever; true and righteous altogether; more to be desired than gold, even much fine gold; and in obeying it, will experience great reward.

Nor does the fact that men are dependent on God, and that he is almighty, lessen the necessity or the benefit of thus hearkening to his voice, believing his declarations, or obeying his commands. Dependent on God, they indeed are; but that, instead of being a reason why they should not immediately hearken to his voice, believe his declarations, and obey his commands, is the very reason why they should.

5. As the Spirit of the Lord is the builder of this temple, and he operates by the truth, we see the reason why a knowledge of the Spirit, and of his truth, should be communicated, in the least possible time, to all people. All people need this knowledge. They are in imminent danger of perishing eternally without it. It is suited to their condition; and adapted to meet their wants.

Nothing else will do it. We have this remedy. Freely we have received, and freely we are bound to give. God commands, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. And he that believeth not shall be damned. But how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear, without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? And by whom shall they be sent, if not by us, who know that there is a Holy Ghost; who know the truth which he has revealed; and through the belief and practice of which, he sanctifies and saves the souls of men; and who are commanded by the Holy Ghost, in the least possible time, to make known his truth to all people? The grand business of every one should be to embrace the gospel himself, and thus, in his own experience, find it to be the power of God to salvation; and to exert his influence to have this done by every man, woman and child, in Christendom and throughout the world. He is bound by high and sacred obligations not only to embrace the gospel himself, but to exert his influence to cause it, in the least possible time, to be proclaimed to every creature. And from the discharge of this duty no man can be excused. Let him be a merchant, a manufacturer, a mechanic, or a farmer; a professional man; a man of leisure, or a man of business; whoever, wherever, whatever he may be, he is bound by obligations which he can never throw off, to go himself; or, assist others to go and preach the gospel to all people; and to use his influence to induce all people to embrace it. To this he is bound to devote his time, his talents, his influence, his property. Here is an object for which it is *glorious* to labor; glorious to acquire property, learning, talents, influence, every thing which can be made subsidiary to the diffusion of the knowledge of God and his salvation. And here is an object for which men may

live not only safely, and blissfully for themselves, but for their children, and children's children; in which the accumulated treasures of wisdom, and knowledge, and wealth, which any and all may be enabled to accumulate, instead of drowning in destruction and perdition those who come after them, may be so used as to work out for them an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Parents, do you wish to be rich, and to have your children rich? to live rich, to die rich, and to be rich to all eternity? Be rich in good works; ready to distribute; willing to communicate; and thus lay up for yourselves and them, a good foundation against the time to come; an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and never to fade away. Do you wish for glory? Inscribe your names and those of your children, on a monument where they will shine, in living characters, an eternity after all the monuments of earth shall have crumbled into ruins; inscribe them on those *living* stones of that living temple, whose foundation is the Prince of life; and where they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, forever and ever. Though it is to be built by the Spirit of the Lord, yet he has need of you, and of your children. And forget not, O, I beseech you, forget not, that you and they have need of him, and will continue to have need of him, to all eternity. His favor is life, and his loving kindness is better than life.

6. We see in view of this subject, that the missionary of the cross is engaged in a great and glorious work. Men may, if they will, view him with pity, or contempt; as a wild enthusiast, or blind fanatic. God views him as a co-worker with himself; in preparing his own eternal habitation. They are workers together with God. Though he dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as he saith, "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool;" yet, he dwelleth also with the humble, and taketh up his abode with the contrite in heart. As it is written, "Ye are the temple of the living God." And God hath said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." "If a man love me, my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." He shall dwell in them, and they in him; and they shall be filled eternally with the fulness of God. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.

7. As the Spirit of the Lord is the author and finisher of this work, all are bound to be instant, sincere, fervent, and persevering, not only in labors, but in supplications to him, that their efforts, and the efforts of others, may not be in vain, in the Lord. Without his influence, though you put a Bible into every family, and preach the gospel to every creature, not a blind eye will be opened, nor a deaf ear be unstopped; not a hard heart will be softened, nor a distant soul be brought nigh by the blood of Jesus. Not a living stone will ever shine in that living temple, but all will be cold, motionless, and dead. Even the glorious gospel, that word of life, will be, through its perversion, a savor only of death unto death. But let the voice of the "Resurrec-

tion and the life," "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," be proclaimed, even by the feeble tongue of mortals, and attended, as in answer to humble affectionate supplications, it will be, by the power of him who quickeneth the dead, and calleth things that are not as though they were; and there shall be a shaking among the dry bones; and bones shall come together, bone to his bone; and flesh and sinews shall come upon them; and they shall stand up for God, an exceeding great army. Nations shall be born in a day. I, Jehovah, have spoken, and I will do it: I will hasten it; for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and water the earth, and cause it to bring forth and bud—so shall my word be. It shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in the things whereto I sent it. Ye shall go forth with joy, and be led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree; instead of the brier, the myrtle tree. The glory of Lebanon shall come; the fir tree and the box tree, to beautify the place of my sanctuary. And I will make it glorious. Thy walls shall be salvation, and thy gates praise.

8. As the Spirit of the Lord is the builder of this temple, it will be completed. For four thousand years he was preparing to lay the foundation; and that is now done. For six thousand years he has been preparing the materials; and taking them on to the spot. Not a few, whom I once saw, *here*, and some who took part with us in these deliberations, I now see, *there*, shining like the sun. Multitudes, partakers of the same boundless grace, are now on their way. And he who hath begun this good work, is able, and he has resolved to finish it; to carry them onward; and all who shall follow them, and present them, spotless, and faultless, before the Eternal. And has HE begun, and will he not make an end? Shall any of his enemies ever taunt him, and say, He began to build, and was not able to finish? No. Let difficulties accumulate till they fill the whole earth, and rise up to heaven. What art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, GRACE, GRACE, UNTO IT.

Let all the enemies of Christ in our world unite to oppose it, and let all who people the world of darkness come forth to assist them; let them be aided by every enemy of God in the universe, and the rising of this temple, will laugh at opposition and mock every effort to resist it. Disappointment will be written upon every exertion, and all opposers held up to the view of the universe, as everlasting monuments of their own weakness and folly. They will soon feel, that they are contending, not with might, nor with power, but with the Spirit of the Lord; who looketh on the mountains, and they tumble; on the hills, and they melt: from whose face the heavens and the earth flee away.

Opposer of Christ, you may, if you will, prevent yourself from ever

becoming a part of this temple; and carry yourself to a spot, from which should you ever behold it, it will be at an amazing distance; and on the other side of an impassable gulf. Its glory may exceed a thousand suns, and cast its brightness even on you; but it will only show you in ten-fold horrors, the gloomy darkness of that dreadful abyss into which you will forever be descending. To that abyss you are going; to continue there, *forever*,

Unless born from above, created anew,
And washed in the fountain, now open for you;
A Savior is offered, he calls you, to-day;
Why hazard your souls by a longer delay?
Embrace his kind offers, O taste of his love;
Then rise in triumph, to that temple above.

And the glory shall be given, all to him, to whom it is all due, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the God of salvation, forever. Amen.

SERMON CCCX.

By Rev. RUFUS ANDERSON, D. D.,

ONE OF THE SECRETARIES OF THE AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

THE PROMISED ADVENT OF THE SPIRIT.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days, will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered."—Joel 2: 28—32.

How evident it is that more is wanting than we now have to bring about the conversion of the world—both to multiply the means, and to give them success. Not that the churches of Christ are unable to publish the gospel every where. Not that there is a lack of opportunity. Not that the experiments already made have been without

ample encouragement. Not, in short, that a sufficient motive is wanting to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. But who does not know, that the churches are slow to engage in this work?—that the work itself is regarded in the light of a *charity*, which one is at liberty to perform, or not, as he pleases, instead of being the *great thing*, for which the church exists, and for which the Christian lives?—and that it is hard to obtain the men to go as missionaries to heathen nations, and still harder the means of supporting the few that go; while the results of missionary labor, though equal, nay, superior to those of pastoral labor at home, and greater than is generally supposed, are still such as would require ages upon ages to complete the earth's spiritual renovation?

Does it follow, that the conversion of the world, by means of human instrumentality, is a hopeless or even doubtful work? By no means. On the contrary, the enterprise is full of hope, full of certainty. And it is so for a reason which is gloriously set forth in the Scriptures. The piety of the professed people of God is not always to remain in its present low condition. The church is to have a transforming visitation from on high; and the world is to have a similar visitation. The Spirit is to be poured out upon all flesh. There is to be an advent of the Spirit, so to speak—a grand putting forth of his influence, a mighty effort of his power, that shall ensure both the publication and the triumph of the gospel over all the world.

The delightful theme, then, on which we are to dwell, is this:—*That a time is coming when divine power is to be exerted, in connection with the preached gospel, at home and abroad, to an extent far greater than it ever has been, so as to render the gospel every where triumphant beyond all former experience.*

My first object, of course, will be to ESTABLISH this great truth.

As a first step in the argument I assert the fact, *that such an exercise of divine power is* NECESSARY, *if the world is to be converted.*

Look at the greatness of the work to be done. The field is the world, with scarcely less than a thousand millions of inhabitants. Three-fourths of these are beyond the pale of Christendom—Mohammedans, or else Pagans. Estimating the population of China at three hundred and fifty millions, which is believed to be its true population, at least eight hundred millions are yet to be made acquainted with the gospel. Whether we regard this part of the great field numerically, or geographically, its magnitude is truly overwhelming. And all the missions, which we discover in our survey of it, seem only a few bright points on a boundless region of darkness. We may contemplate the magnitude of the work in a two-fold aspect; first, as so many hundred millions of minds, to be approached in all the extent of their wide dispersion, and then interested, enlightened, and won over to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, involving the overthrow of numerous ancient systems of philosophy and superstition, and an almost entire revolution in the social state of mankind. And, secondly, as an endeavor to enlist the whole Christian community in this work, and for a long course of years, and to an extent of self-

consecration and devotedness very far beyond any thing yet seen in any portion of that community. How many thousands of the best and ablest members of the church must engage personally as missionaries; and how many millions of money must be contributed annually, to furnish them and their native helpers with the means of living and usefulness.

Now who does not see, in this view, the necessity of such an agency of the Spirit? In vain shall we expect so universal a movement, so vast a spiritual revolution, without it, either in the church, or the world. Indeed it must be confessed, that the zeal and enterprise of the church are almost as much behind this result, as is the spiritual condition of pagan nations. There is even more difficulty, as I believe, in perceiving how we are to obtain the means for the great moral conflict, than how, if we had them, they could be successfully employed. I feel more inclined to despair, when looking on the worldliness and apathy of the church, than by all I can see of opposition and difficulty elsewhere. Woe to the world, if the church is not to be blessed with such an outpouring of the Spirit! And alas for mankind, if that Almighty Agent does not soon wing the rays of his truth everywhere, with far more of his Power Divine!

2. Proceeding another step in the argument, I assert, *that such a result is not only necessary, but* HIGHLY PROBABLE, *irrespective of all direct prophecy or promise on the subject.*

Who can believe, that a world embraced within the range of the influence of Christ's atoning blood, is always to remain covered with the ruins of the fall? Who, after learning that the Son of God made a sacrifice of his own life in order to destroy the works and power of the devil, can believe that the god of this world is always to hold his usurped dominions? Who, that has reflected on the object and plan and history of redemption, does not expect that work to proceed onward till its influence embraces the whole earth? It is not prophecy and promise alone, that awakens expectations of this sort. Such expectations arise also from just views of the gospel as a system of mercy; they are the spontaneous breathings of every heart that is filled with the love of Christ. The true follower of Christ rejoices to anticipate the triumphs of his King, the universal extension of his reign, and the clearing off from the face of the whole earth of the ruins of the fall. And though this result be connected with ever so great an amount of human instrumentality, he spontaneously refers it to divine power as the only effective cause. And the more pains you take to make him acquainted with the greatness of the enterprise, the more does he feel the necessity of divine interposition for its accomplishment; and the more probable does it seem to him that his almighty and gracious King will grant such an interposition. Yes, it is an animating truth, that what the world needs there is the highest probability, under the government of God, that it will sooner or later have. And what does it need so much, let me ask, as such a gracious visitation of the Holy Spirit as is predicted and promised in the Scriptures?

3. This brings me to my third topic, in which, after all, lies the main strength of the argument, viz. *the direct Scriptural evidence of a great and general outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days.*

The following is, perhaps, the most remarkable passage bearing on this subject, in the word of God. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days, will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be delivered." The apostle Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, declares this passage to be a prediction of events, which were to happen under the Christian dispensation. Referring his hearers to the outpouring of the Spirit and the wonderful events they then saw, he says, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;" and then he quotes the whole passage above cited. He means, that the time on which they were then entering was the time referred to by the prophet, that the events they then saw were the kind of events foretold, and that this remarkable prophecy began then to receive its fulfilment. Then commenced the dispensation of the Spirit. It was, however, only the commencement of that dispensation. The grand progress, the glorious consummation, was reserved for other days. The pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh, with that universal, overwhelming influence described by the inspired bard in figurative language drawn from prophetic raptures and oriental warfare, is a blessing the world is yet waiting for. It is to be an all-subduing agency of the Almighty Spirit. When coming in its power and fulness, it will be to the whole church, with the exception of miraculous gifts, what it was to the small company of disciples assembled in the upper room on that memorable day; and it will be to the whole world, what it was to the three thousand that wept and repented under the preaching of Peter. Then was seen, though on a small scale, what is yet to be seen on the broad scale of the universal church and the entire earth. Then was seen the beginning of the fulfilment of a prediction, that looks mainly at that last great shock in the mighty conflict, which is to be followed by voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever!

But there is another source of proof, still more convincing, in the *results* foretold, as to follow from the reign of the Messiah and the publication of his gospel, every one of which presupposes an extraordinary putting forth of divine power. I can quote only a very few of the many predictions. "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." "And they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; na-

tion shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries also of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." "In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." "For thus saith the Lord, behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream." "The kingdoms of this world [shall] become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." "And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

Now these results are to happen on earth, under the reign of the Messiah; and who does not perceive that they are what has never yet been? Yet, making due allowance for figurative language, they are what would certainly follow from such an outpouring of the Spirit as is foretold by the prophet Joel. But in vain shall we look for them, either in the church or in the world, without such a visitation. All that we now see, and all that we read of down from the apostolic times, whether in the church or out of it, are scarcely the dawn of the glorious day predicted in the passages just quoted. In the church Ephraim is then no more to vex Judah, nor is Judah to vex Ephraim; because the spirit of sect will then cease to exist, if not its very form and reality, under the almighty influence of the Spirit of truth and love. The world, too, is to become thoroughly pacific, and to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. On the most moderate supposition, its inhabitants will then be blessed with a religious education, and with a general prevalence of piety. Now there are said to be as many as ninety-five thousand teachers of schools in the United States, and not less than fifteen thousand preachers of the gospel. To supply the world, therefore, with means of instruction no better than our own country possesses, would require (to say nothing of books) that in some way a million of preachers be furnished, every twenty years, for the pulpit, and more than six millions of teachers, every five years, for the school-room. And to bring the world under such a holy and blessed influence as the word of God predicts, even within the space of a century, the church must hear of not less than twenty millions of souls brought into the kingdom of Christ every year, or what on an average shall be equivalent to that. All this and far more would take place, if the Spirit were to be poured out upon all flesh; for the great body

of these teachers, both for the school-room and the pulpit, are not to be sent from Christian lands, but raised up on the spot; they are to be of native growth. But without such an outpouring, the greatest possible array of means could be regarded with no feeling of hope. Nor must we for one moment forget the lamentable truth, that the very same outpouring of the Spirit is as necessary to procure the means, as it is to make them effectual.

With the same unwavering confidence, therefore, with which we do actually look forward to the universal triumph of the gospel on the earth, do we anticipate this universal outpouring of the Spirit. This certainly is yet to come. All that has been seen of his agency in the world hitherto, has been in the first instance to *plant* and then to *preserve* a church upon the earth, rather than to make that church universal. His presence has been as it were local and occasional, rather than general and constant. The church has looked to this grandly decisive outpouring as yet to come, rather than rejoiced in it as already happened. As, under the old dispensation, the church waited and waited long for the promised Messiah to make redemption for the world; so now, under the new dispensation, the church waits, and has waited long too, for the promised Spirit to come and appropriate to the world the blessings of that redemption. Yes, *we* now stand in the interesting attitude of waiting for the coming of the Spirit, just as the saints of old did for the coming of the Savior. And let us wait with prayer, with hope, with joyful expectation. For he will surely come. We are disposed to believe he will come suddenly—it may be not every where at once, but wherever there are the due preparations for his operating on the minds of men. It may be that he will come first into his church, his spiritual temple, and cast out thence the spirit of the world, and fill it (blessed day!) with the beauty and glory of his celestial influence.

4. We now proceed another step, and show *how this advent of the Spirit is even now indicated by certain remarkable preparatory measures.*

Some of these preparatory measures result from direct efforts of the church, and others and those the most important from great providential movements in human society.

The unprecedented efforts made by the church to multiply the number of preachers of the gospel in Christian lands, to plant new churches, and to extend the benefits of a Christian education, are all so many preparations for the Divine Spirit to exert his power. The Spirit operates on the minds of men *by means* of the truth, and therefore whatever is done to increase the amount of religious knowledge, prepares the way for his coming and agency. This is the object of the Christian ministry; and, I need not say, this is the object of Christian missions to the heathen. Missionaries go as the forerunners of the Spirit, as pioneers, as heralds. Their whole prescribed duty is to make proclamation of the truth. They are answerable only for making this proclamation faithfully. He who sends them forth says to each of them, as he does indeed to every preacher of the gospel,

"Son of man, if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul." Christian missionaries have executed their commission when they have made all possible efforts to bring the gospel in contact with the minds of men. They can do no more. The hearing ear, the awakened conscience, the understanding heart, the willing obedience, are all the appropriate work of the Holy Spirit. Paul plants, Apollos waters, but God gives the increase.

Now there has been a commencement of preparations of this sort in very many of the benighted nations and tribes of men. In hundreds of dark places the truth begins to shine; in most very feebly, nevertheless it shines, and there is a gradual and constant increase of the light of life. Some millions of immortal minds are no longer in the total darkness they once were; and all that is necessary to make full preparation for the Spirit among the heathen, is to have these lights multiplied and increased in brightness, so as to throw the rays of truth over all nations.

The other preparations, resulting from providential movements in society, are on a far more extended scale. God, by means of a thousand causes, is fast throwing the world open to his people, and is even bringing large portions of it either under the government or the controlling influence of Christian nations. He is furnishing his people with means for making the gospel bear on the minds of men, far more powerful than he saw fit to bestow on his people in former ages; and he is taking away the impediments to traveling, and making access easy to almost all parts of the world. In a word, who can look over the earth, and not believe that providential preparations are in progress on a vast scale for the coming of the Spirit? While the preparatory agency of good men is beheld only here and there, providential preparations are going on, at this moment, throughout the habitable earth. And doubtless there are, too, preparatory influences of the Spirit himself on the minds of men, even where the gospel is not known, and where there is no truth except a few rays of the light of nature. But on this I shall not now dwell.

To do justice to this part of the subject, I must call attention to one other cheering indication, namely,

5. *In some recent events in heathen lands, which seem like forerunners to this advent of the Spirit.*

Perhaps the most remarkable of these events is the recent outpouring of the Spirit at the Sandwich Islands. Such an outpouring as that was in connection with all the other protestant missions now in the heathen world, would bring millions of souls into the visible church in a single year. And it is well known that many of the islands in the South Pacific ocean, where English missionaries are laboring, have been blessed with similar gracious visitations. In Tinnevelly, a district in southern India, there was an awakening, a few years since, which, had it extended with like power over all India, would have subverted the great Braminic system of idolatry, and made Christianity the nominal religion at least of a hundred millions.

Even the recent awakening at Krishnagur, in Bengal, with only a very small amount of the light of truth, needed only to become general to overturn the superstitions of that populous province. There have also been outpourings of the Spirit in South Africa, which, if they had been more diffused, would have christianized the entire Hottentot and Caffre races. The same remark may be made respecting the Karens of Burmah, the Greenlanders, and the North American Indians. Among some small portions of the Oriental churches also, there are, at present, operations of the Spirit, which, were they extended to all portions of those churches, would raise them from their spiritual death.

Now these several agencies of the Spirit, viewed in connection with the preparatory measures already mentioned, seem like forerunners of that universal outpouring, which is to change the moral aspect of the world. They encourage the hope of such a blessing, and they may perhaps be regarded as the first fruits of it.

And it is interesting to observe how, in these events, there are diversities of operations, but the same God working all in all; how the agency of the Spirit presents itself to our view in different aspects, but all tending to the same result. The several operations that have been referred to as forerunning events, have each their distinctive traits; from the "great and strong wind," rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks, as at the Sandwich Islands, to the "still small voice," as among the Oriental churches.

I have gone through with the argument, which seems to me fully to establish the fact, that there is yet to be a great and universal outpouring of the Spirit upon the church and the world. And can there be any reasonable doubt on the subject? May we not yield our faith to the delightful anticipation? Believing that we may, let us now take a brief survey of *the* EFFECTS *of this outpouring of the Spirit.*

And, first, in the CHURCH. The real people of God will be induced to enlist fully in the work of preparing the way of the Lord in every part of the habitable earth. There will be no longer any reserve, any holding back. A mighty result! but it is one which the Holy Spirit can perform with infinite ease. He has only to exert an influence upon the spiritual discernment of the soul, and upon its powers of feeling, and the work is done. Then the spiritual world opens and spreads out in glorious prospect, as Canaan did to Moses on the top of Pisgah. The whole heart, the whole man yields, voluntarily, joyfully. Where now is the fascinating, bewildering power of riches, or of the honors and pleasures of the world? Gone! Fled before the presence of him, whose prerogative it is to proclaim liberty to spiritual captives. Ambition, pride, vanity, and the love of the world disappearing, let go their avaricious hold upon millions of wealth. God's people are made willing in the day of his power, and there is a liberal hand and a full treasury. Men come up to their duty, and feel it to be a privilege. What the amount will be of individual prayer and labor, and what the proportion will be of individual contribution to help onward the cause of Christ in that day, I pretend

not to determine. But who believes, that the men and the women now constituting the visible church are doing all they would rejoice to do, if the Spirit were to make them this visitation? Ye who dwell in your ceiled houses, who recline on your couches of ease, whose tables are loaded with the bounties of Providence, and who have all that heart can desire, may *you* feel this melting, all-subduing influence. And may all be anointed with this holy anointing, baptized with this heavenly baptism, created anew in Christ Jesus by this spiritual regeneration. Even so I believe it will yet be throughout the church. The low state of benevolence, now scarcely anywhere above the lowest standard of Christian self-denial, is not always to continue thus. The true members of Christ's church are to become the subjects of a wonder-working divine energy. They are to feel the powerful influence of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. The abundance of their joy, in their unreserved consecration of themselves to their Lord and Master, will abound in the riches of their liberality; yea, and abound too in prayer, flowing out of a full spirit that will not cease its importunities for this very blessing from on high.

What an admirable object will the Christian then be, and what an admirable object the Christian church! Zion will arise and shine, her light being come, and the glory of the Lord being risen upon her. The church will exist for the good of the world. No talents will be deemed too great for the missionary work, no learning too profound, no eloquence too fervid, no standing too elevated. What armies will be sent by the church into the empire of darkness, and what means will it put in requisition for the holy warfare!

I must here guard, however, against a serious misapprehension. Nothing in the leading sentiment of this discourse can excuse the church for delaying to enter fully upon the prosecution of this work. I have indeed stated my belief, that, in point of fact, the church will not enter upon this work as it ought to do, until the Holy Spirit is poured out upon it in more copious measure. But this belief is founded only on the fact, that the love and zeal of the church are at present wholly inadequate. Let no one urge this as forming any excuse for the church to delay the work. It can be no reason why the work should not be prosecuted to its full extent. How can the church be excusable in waiting for the grand advent of the Spirit, when the very thing it is required to do is to go before the Spirit, and prepare the way for his advent?—and when, too, it now has all the learning, all the wealth, all the power of speech, all the facilities for traveling, that it would have, if the Spirit were thus poured out?—and when it has the most abundant favoring indications of Providence, and all it ever will have that is imperative in the command of its Savior, and all it ever can have that is affecting, that is overpowering, in motive? How can this be a valid excuse, when all that the church needs, more than it now has, to cause it speedily to publish the gospel through the world, is more willingness, more disposition, more incli-

nation to do what is confessedly its duty? In view of this lamentable indisposition and backwardness, we do indeed rejoice in the promised great outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Christian church;—but then, ye people of God, ye surely can have no right to *wait* till ye are thus visited. If really converted men and women, how can ye have the face to demand more grace, before performing the very work for which ye were called into the kingdom!

I must also make one other remark, before proceeding to illustrate the effects of this visitation upon the world at large. In speaking of this great outpouring of the Spirit, I would by no means deny that it will be attended, for a time, by such divisions and heresies in the church, and by such fearful convulsions in and among the nations,—owing to the vastly excited and as yet unsubdued state of men's minds,—as almost to realize the prophet's figurative description of wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke, the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood. Such a thing is not improbable. It may even be an indirect consequence of the first onset of the mighty Agent for the overthrow of iniquity. And what observing, thoughtful mind does not now perceive indications of a future war of opinion, in which religion shall be a predominant element, a war of religions as it were, more extended and more terrible than any thing of the kind yet seen, and which may at length fearfully threaten even the very existence of the true church? And it may be, and the Scriptures give countenance to the idea, that just in this emergency, God, the Holy Spirit, will come forth in the transcendent power and majesty of his grace, as he came forth, at the formation of the earth, with his creative power, upon the dark, tumultuous waters of the great deep.

And then, will the WORLD feel a renovating spiritual influence throughout the vast extent of its population. Far more than we have seen on any of the more favored spots that have been mentioned, will then be witnessed wherever the gospel is proclaimed. The progress of the heralds of the cross will be one of light, and everywhere the rays of truth will be winged with power. At the sound of the gospel trumpet, every Jericho shall come down; and at the call of the minister of Christ, the sun shall stay his progress in the heavens. And then, as we believe, will Satan be bound that he deceive the nations no more, and satanic power and influence be withdrawn from the earth. What a change will there be in the policy of the nations, when he, who, with iron grasp, has swayed his wicked sceptre over them for ages, is hurled from his impious and bloody throne! What a change in the civil and social relations and condition of mankind! What rapid, what wonderful changes will there be daily, all over the world! Men will yield themselves to the divine influence in masses. Nations will be born in a day. Idols and idol worship, and superstition in its thousand forms, will come to an end. How glorious the prospect! See the multitude assembled before yonder idol on the plain of Juggernaut, and in the midst, that

Christian preacher. The tumult of the people around him is like the sound of many waters. But soon it is hushed. Every ear attends, every heart is touched, every eye melts, and thousands bow to the reign of Jesus. Lo, the day of mercy for the world has come. The Almighty Spirit is going forth conquering and to conquer. Brumha, and Vishnu, and Boodh, and the False Prophet, and the Man of Sin, and every other spiritual abomination in high places, flies before him, like the shades of night before the rising sun, and the messengers of the gospel have free course throughout the earth;—till at length every island and every continent is subdued. Then the rapt visions and prophetic paintings of the latter day are realized, and Jesus reigns over a redeemed, sanctified, and happy world.

In conclusion I would ask, what hinders this work from advancing among heathen nations far more rapidly than it does at present? What is the insuperable obstacle? Alas! what can it be except the worldliness and apathy of the Christian church? The real difficulty exists no where else. To the church is given the work of preparing the way for the Spirit to bless the heathen world with its influences, and the church has not done it. The gospel has not been everywhere preached, and comparatively few minds among the heathen have yet been trained by culture to take the oversight of converts, should they be greatly multiplied in every land. Should the harvest wave over the field of the world, it would perish, yes, it would perish, for want of reapers. Why has the church so long neglected this work? Why does she neglect it now? The cry of spiritual death, that is heard over the earth, bears witness to an amazing disregard of obligation on the part of members of the church, and to a corresponding accumulation of guilt.

And who of us can plead guiltless? Are we interested as we ought to be in the progress of Christ's kingdom? Have we prayed as we should have done? Are we doing all we can to awaken songs of praise to the Savior in every nation and tribe of mankind? The indifference of Christians to this great work is amazing. Who would believe that a child of God, an heir of glory, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and commanded to publish abroad the tidings of his love, could think and care so little whether these tidings were thus proclaimed? And if it be so with us, how can we believe that we have the spirit of Christ? And how look forward with hope to the time, when we shall stand before him in yonder heaven, and see him face to face? Verily the church has neglected this work too long, and so have we its members. Let us arise every one, in the strength of the Lord God. He calls us from on high, and commands that so far as in us lies we prepare his way to every family, and to every human heart. No more let us take counsel of our love of the world, no more of selfishness, no more of unbelief. In the fear and love of God let us do our duty in this matter, that our own souls, in holy fellowship with the Spirit, may rejoice with self-satisfying and with everlasting joy.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 11. Vol. XV.] NOVEMBER, 1841. [Whole No. 179.

SERMON CCCXI.

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THE CONNECTION OF RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES.

"*In doctrine showing uncorruptness.*"—Titus ii. 7.

No subject surpasses, in importance, that of religious doctrine. Religious doctrine may be defined, *the science of eternal life.* If eternal life is the greatest of all interests, then is the doctrine pertaining to this subject the greatest of all themes. Hence the directions and warnings of the Bible in regard to this matter. "I give you good doctrine: forsake not my law." "Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine." "Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine." And the text, "In doctrine showing uncorruptness." *Doctrine* is important as it influences *practice*, and practice influences *destiny.* Great care, therefore, should be taken to cherish the doctrines of religion in their purity.

There is another consideration to be taken into the account. The doctrines of religion have an intimate connection with each other, and lend each other mutual aid and support. No doctrine of religion stands alone, or can be viewed alone, and appear in its true light. It must be viewed in its just connection with the other doctrines, and in the light which this connection sheds upon it. The doctrines of religion comprise one grand, systematic, and harmonious whole; every part of which borrows some feature of its character from its connection with the other parts, and the whole being always more or less affected by the treatment which any part receives.

That there is such connection existing between the doctrines of religion; that they are one grand harmonious system, with mutual dependences and relationships; might be presumed beforehand, from

the character of God from whom they come. God is a God of order, and not of confusion. And, in no department of his works should we expect order, system, more strikingly to exist, than in the assemblage of doctrines which he communicates to his intelligent creatures to guide them to eternal life. It is very true, that the order here mentioned is not always apparent in the outward form of these doctrines; in the time and manner of stating them in the Bible: any more than order is always observable in the outward appearance of things in nature. In both cases, there might be an intention on the part of God—probably was—to leave some subjects in a measure of obscurity with the express view of calling forth the activity and research of his creatures to understand them. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing:" and the honor and happiness of man to search out the wisdom of his works. And in both nature and revelation, as the search goes forward, there will be found, lying at the bottom, a deep principle of order; a universal regard to system, symmetry, proportion; a connection, or linking things together in mutual relationships; a making them to depend on each other, and to lend a combined influence to the accomplishment of a common and grand result.

See this in the natural world. Look at the members of the human body. What proportion they bear to each other. And how are they all adopted to act together for the accomplishment of the great purposes of life. And who can touch one of these members to injure it, but the others share in the injury? As the Apostle expresses it, "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." Look at the different parts of the solar system. How do they all mutually act upon each other, and conspire together to a common end. And who could tear away one part, without sending disorder through the whole? Blot out the sun, and there would be no center of attraction to hold the rest together. Blot out any planet, and the general balance will be destroyed, irregularity be introduced, and the end of the whole defeated.

Now just so is it with the doctrines of religion. They comprise a well-balanced and harmonious whole, with mutual relationships and dependences, acting together towards a common and grand result; and no one of them can be touched, but the others will feel the deranging influence, and the whole suffer a diminution of its power, and perhaps an entire loss of its power, to accomplish the ends for which these doctrines were revealed. As the doctrine of the physical universe, therefore, should be accurately understood, and every part of it allowed its just place, so is the doctrine of the spiritual universe entitled to the same treatment. And even more so, as the interests of our spiritual being are greater than any other. The ancient caution in regard to the tabernacle and its furniture, shows the mind of God on this subject, and was designed to beget in the minds of his creatures habits of carefulness and accuracy in respect to all religious matters. "See," saith he, "that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." The

mind of God is the leading mind of the universe. It is all-comprehending. The views of God, therefore, are all right views. And the wisdom of his creatures is to follow whither he leads; to apprehend things exactly in the light in which he exhibits them. So his injunction a little subsequently. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it." And also at the close of the Sacred volume. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." God here warns his creatures, in the most impressive manner, to let the system of religious doctrines stand exactly as he has revealed it, and to imbibe and cherish all its parts in their purity. No one can add, or take away, without introducing an influence that tends to derange the whole system, and defeat the high and momentous ends it was revealed to accomplish.

Take several specific points for the illustration of the subject here stated.

I. Suppose a man denies the existence of a God. This denial, it needs no argument to show, will derange,—nay, even destroy,—all religious doctrines, of every description whatever, along with it. This is blotting the sun from the center: and, this done, whatever of beauty and brilliancy has existed around it, disappears, and is seen no more.

II. Suppose a man denies the Bible to be the word of God. Here also, of course, he sweeps away at a stroke all the doctrines which it is the peculiar province and glory of the Bible to teach. The foundation gone, the superstructure perishes with it.

These, it is true, are extreme cases. Others may not be so sweeping. Still others are not without their deleterious influence of this description.

III. Take the doctrine of the universal providence of God. The Bible teaches it. "Not a sparrow falleth on the ground without your father.—The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Let this doctrine be denied. Let the position be assumed, that God concerns himself only with greater events, while with smaller occurrences he has no connection. What will follow? It will follow, first, that there is a large class of benefits daily coming in upon us, for which we are under no obligation to God. What comes to us through channels with which God has no connection, imposes upon us no obligation with respect to him. In respect to a large part of our means of existence, therefore,—all that part which is made up of incidents beneath divine notice,—we may live as atheists, and be blameless. It will follow, secondly, that no confidence can be placed in the providential government of God. Every one knows that small events are often productive of very serious and momentous consequences. "Behold," says a sacred writer, "how great a matter a little

fire kindleth!" Now if this first kindling is not noticed by God,—if it belongs to parts of his creation over which his province does not extend,—who shall assure us that, in its progress, it will not lay waste many precious, invaluable interests? Who shall assure us that thousands of such fires will not break out at the same moment, and the universe be wrapped in one grand conflagration before the time? Deny a universal providence, and you deny the only agency that can guide the universe in safety, and open the way for universal derangement and ruin. A foundation-stone in the temple of truth is removed, and quickly the entire splendid edifice is prostrate in the dust.

IV. The same might be said of the sovereignty of God: by which is meant, not an arbitrary proceeding, in disregard of the dictates of justice, and wisdom, and love; but a proceeding dictated by the very highest perfection which God possesses. The sovereignty of God is, his acting from the resources of his own infinite mind; his doing, in every case, what his all-comprehending intelligence, his all-pervading wisdom, and his all-abounding goodness, determine to be best. Suppose God were to act on any other principle than this, what would be the result? Suppose he were to consult any created mind, and follow its wishes, would the universe be safe? Where would be the doctrine of confidence in God, and the stability of his affairs? Where would be the doctrine, that, "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever?" The sovereignty of God injures no creature: but on the contrary, renders every virtuous creature safe; and further still, gives eternal life to countless millions of ill-deserving. The sovereignty of God interferes with the moral freedom of no creature: but on the contrary, first ordained and constituted that freedom, and will guard it while the universe endures. The sovereignty of God denied, the worship of God is destroyed, and all that clusters around the Divine Being, rendering him an object of praise, disappears.

V. Take the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul. Let this be denied. Who does not see that the denial makes the whole system of one's religious views altogether different from what it would be were this doctrine admitted? If man has no soul, and has before him no hereafter, what is there left worthy the name of religion? He may, indeed, allow that there is a God, and that it is his duty to pay him some passing regard. But man, reduced to an insect of a day, all those duties and observances which have reference to a future and endless state of being, are to him of no use. They fall from his mind, and constitute no more any part of his religious system, if religious system he may be said yet to possess. No soul, no care of the soul, of course, is needful. Man, but a more splendid brute, may live, and may die, like the brute. No longer immortal, provisions for his immortality no longer have place. The rejection of this one doctrine, therefore,—man's immortality,—destroys, essentially and for ever, the whole system of

religion contained in the Bible. This one stone removed from the arch, the whole structure quickly lies in ruins.

VI. See the same thing in respect to another point. I allude to the doctrine of human depravity:—the doctrine of a universal and total depravity—an entire extinction of holiness in the heart, an entire alienation of the mind from God. This is what the Bible teaches. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Let this doctrine be denied. Let it be asserted, on the contrary, that all men have yet a measure of holiness within them: nay, that even the worst of men have yet about them much more of good than of evil. What will be the influence of this position on the other doctrines of the Christian system.

Its first effect will be to destroy the doctrine of regeneration. If man is not "dead," he has no need to be "made alive." He is alive already. If that which is "born of the flesh" is pure, it has no need to be "born of the Spirit" in order to purity. The robe of purity it wears already. If man has not entirely lost love to God, he has no need that "the love of God be shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, given unto him." That love is already there. If man is not entirely destitute of holiness, and under the influence of contrary affections, it cannot be said, he that "is in Christ is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." It is not so. He that is in Christ, has nothing new in kind: but only a greater degree, perhaps, of that which he had before. The doctrine of regeneration, then,—of a "new heart and a new spirit,"—of "passing from death unto life,"—of being "a new creature in Christ,"—perishes at once with the denial of human depravity, deep, and radical, and entire.

Another effect of such denial is greatly to impair and weaken all those sentiments which may be expected to arise in the heart in view of salvation. If man has something of holiness by nature remaining within him,—nay, much more of holiness than of sin—then has he something in which to glory before God, and is not wholly indebted to grace for acceptance. If man is not wholly sinful, then his humiliation before God, on account of sin, his self-condemnation, his repentance, his sense of gratitude in view of forgiveness, will all be immensely different from what they would have been, had he felt himself drawn up from the deep waters of entire depravity, and a corresponding condemnation. These graces, it is manifest, will all be exceedingly slight, compared with the vigor they would have possessed in view of deliverance from a more deplorable condition. "A certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?" Do you doubt the correctness of the answer, "He to whom he forgave most?" And just so with the case before us. The man who views himself

saved from a great apostasy, will feel his soul deeply moved, and will utter corresponding confession, supplication, and praise. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins." "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God." While the man who views himself as having possessed a measure of holiness before, and as having that holiness simply increased by visitations from above, will give utterance to a different strain. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are. . . . I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Which of these two men manifest feelings most in accordance with the Bible, you will judge,—which is most commended by our Saviour. I adduce them as examples to illustrate the connection of religious doctrines, and to showhow the denial of one leads to the denial of others, or to such modification of them as altogether changes their character.

It follows, moreover, from the denial of human depravity, in the sense mentioned, that there is, and can be, no radical essential distinction between good and bad men. The Bible everywhere supposes such distinction. It denominates them respectively, *saints* and *sinners*, *righteous* and *wicked*, *believers* and *unbelievers*, *penitent* and *impenitent*, *those that fear God* and *those that fear him not*, *those who walk the narrow path that leadeth unto life*, and *those who travel the broad way that leadeth unto death*. But, the doctrine of depravity denied, there is no just foundation for these representations. Sinners have a measure of holiness. And saints, alas! have yet a measure of sin. The difference, therefore, consists only in degree. And who shall decide what degrees of difference shall place those between whom they exist in different classes? Shall ten degrees of holiness render their possessor a good man, and the possessor of nine degrees be placed among the bad? Shall the former enter through the gates into the eternal city, and the latter be shut out from its pure abodes? On what principle shall the judgment be conducted, if this view of the case be admitted? Where shall the line be drawn? But further, does not the Bible promise that the least measure of true grace shall increase and unfold into eternal life? that Israel's great Restorer "shall not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, till he send forth judgment unto victory?" And how shall this be accounted for, except on the supposition that good men have a character which *differs in kind* from that of bad men? that they have a measure of holiness, exerting a prevailing influence over their hearts and lives, while others *have no holiness at all!* There is no other rational solution of the matter but this. The doctrine of human depravity, then, humiliating though it be, yet, lying at the foundation of the Christian system—being, in fact, the very occasion in view of which the whole plan of redemption was devised, and without which that plan had not been needed—cannot

be denied, or even modified, without sending disorder through the whole circle of subjects with which it is connected. This doctrine, therefore, must stand, or the whole Christian system is entirely changed in its character; becomes, indeed, a measure for which there was no occasion, and for which there is now no use. The gospel was given to "save the lost." If men are not "lost," the salvation proffered is not needed, and the system which proposes it crumbles into ruins.

VII. See the same thing illustrated in reference to another doctrine,—that of the supreme divinity of Jesus Christ. Christ is "the Saviour of the world." But who is Christ? Is he placed among created natures? or does he possess a nature that is uncreated? The views which we entertain of his character, must necessary modify our views of the whole work of mediation which he performs,—of the whole system of grace which he administers. Deny, then, his divinity. Make him a mere man, or a mere creature of any grade. What will follow?

It will follow, in the first place, that the love of God in giving him to be our Saviour, is greatly diminished. We now read, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" But if Christ is a mere man, a mere creature, there would seem not to be occasion for these expressions of wonder. The love is not so amazing after all. God so loved the world, that he gave—Moses, gave John, gave Paul, for it! If Christ is but a mere creature like us, here is the measure of the love. It is when we make Christ the Father's EQUAL, sharing with him in his glory before the world was—it is then, that WE WONDER AT THE LOVE WHICH GAVE HIM TO BE OUR SAVIOUR.

Deny Christ his divinity, and it follows, in the second place, that the glory of his works is greatly diminished. We cannot, of course ascribe to him works above what the attributes he possesses will enable him to perform. If he is a mere creature, then he is no longer the Creator of the universe, nor its Sustainer, and is not to be honored as such. All the passages of Scripture, therefore, which declare that "by him were all things created," and that he "upholdeth all things by the word of his power;" and all which teach that "men should honor the Son even as they did the Father;" are swept away at a stroke, or reduced in their meaning infinitely from their obvious import. If Christ be not divine, then must all these ascriptions be withheld from him, and the teachings of the sacred Record be mutilated into a conformity with the low views entertained of his character.

Equally derogatory is such denial, to the work of Christ as a Saviour. If Christ be not divine, then there can be no atonement for the sins of men effected by his sufferings and death. One creature, however exalted, can never make atonement for the sins of

another creature. All that he can render, is due to God on his own account. If Christ is a mere creature, therefore, no benefit can flow from him to the world in this respect. If men are ever saved, they must be saved without the shedding of atoning blood. They must be saved by their own works—on the ground of their own worthiness before God, or through mercy irrespective of an atoning Mediator. And this changes the whole ground of obligation, and the whole song of heaven. No more is it to be said of Christians below, that they are "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ." And no more is it to be sung above, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." No man would speak of being redeemed by the blood of Moses, the blood of John, the blood of Paul; nor of being washed from his sins in their blood. Nor can we reasonably speak thus of the blood of Christ, if he be but a creature. No more can the herald of the cross point to him, and exclaim, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world!" No more can he lift his eye and his hand upward toward him in his glory, and say, "Who is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." These, and all similar passages of the Bible, are to be set aside, or deprived of the truth they contain, the moment Christ is denied his divine and glorious character.

Another consequence of such denial is, Christ can no more be their portion in eternity. No creature is worthy of such confidence. "Cursed be he," says the prophet, "who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from Jehovah." All those passages of the inspired oracles, therefore, which invite the living and the dying to trust in Christ for salvation, and which promise that the heaven of believers shall consist much in the presence of Christ, must be struck from their places and cast away; or, at least, be subjected to frittering interpretations which amount to essentially the same thing. If Christ is a mere creature, he can perform only the works of a creature. In this world, and in heaven, he is but a frail being, having no overflowing grace for others, but needing himself to be sustained by the unseen arm.

In a word, a denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ, carried out in its appropriate influence on other doctrines, changes, radically and entirely, the whole system of Christianity. The extraordinary character of Christ, of course, is discarded. The extraordinary foundation for hope, laid in his blood, is done away. The assistance which he proffers, in a life and in death, is no longer to be relied on. Heaven is no longer to receive its light from his presence. And what is there left which we may speak of as Christianity, in distinction from mere natural religion? All the bright glories of the Gospel, the wonder of the universe, beaming from the sacred page, and all the warm gushing sympathies of heaven towards a lost race, there disclosed, vanish in an instant, and we are left to the chill of a few moral precepts uttered by a creature, commis-

sioned indeed for that purpose, to his fellow creatures. A *teacher* Christ may still be. But he is no longer a SAVIOUR. He is no longer the Hope of the world, and the Joy of the world to come. All this follows from denying him his divine and glorious character. Tear away this foundation, and the whole system of Christianity disappears along with it, and is seen no more.

VIII. An illustration of the same general principles may be seen in respect to the doctrine of the Spirit's influence in the salvation of man. The Bible teaches the necessity of that influence. "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The state in which the gospel finds man, lays the foundation for this necessity. It finds him "dead in trespasses and sins;" "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him;" with the moral tendencies of his nature downward, and not upward. In the moral dispositions of man, while in a state of sin, there is no motion towards God, but all from him. The heart of man, therefore, will never be awakened to move in a right direction, except through the influence of the Holy Ghost. It it included in the doctrine of the Spirit also, that God is a sovereign in the dispensation of his favors of this description. There is a sense, indeed, in which the world is full of the Spirit, as of the air we breathe. But there is another sense in which the Spirit is given, or withheld, at different times, and in respect to different individuals and communities. So we are expressly assured. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Even this, however, is not such sovereignty as to exclude human responsibility in this most weighty matter. They who are left of God, are left for their sin. "Because they do not like to retain God in their knowledge, therefore do they eat of the fruit of their own way, and are filled with their own devices."

Now let this doctrine of the Spirit be denied. Let it be asserted that man has tendencies in himself toward God, and that he can become holy, and gain heaven, without the Spirit's influence. Will the adoption of this sentiment produce no injurious effect on the other doctrines of religion? If man can gain heaven in his own strength, or imagines he can do it, will he not lightly esteem the heavenly Helper? If he fancies that the Spirit's agency is not necessary to its conversion, but that he has the event within his own power, will he not be likely to tread in the paths of presumption, unmindful of the dangers of resisting the merciful Agent, in whom, in fact, is all his hope? Manifestly the whole doctrine of the Spirit's agency will be deemed of very small consequence by him who feels that he is sufficient of himself for the purposes of his salvation. The mercy which bestowed the Spirit, and made his agency a part of the economy of the gospel, will be undervalued. The genuine fruits of the Spirit's influence will be but little

appreciated. If we might suppose them to be possessed, the possessor would thank himself for them, and not the grace of God. The warnings against resistance of the Spirit, will be deemed but trifles. The whole aspect of the gospel, indeed, as a dispensation of the Spirit,—this richest feature in it to a dying world,—this crowning glory of the system,—will all be sunk, and lost. Such is the devastation which will flow from the rejection of the single doctrine of man's dependence on the Spirit for eternal life. The contagion spreads. The whole circle of doctrines pertaining to the Holy Ghost, and his gracious influences in the salvation of men, is tarnished, is dishonored, is virtually discarded. And can the Christian system otherwise than become "another gospel," after such a change as this? How dangerous is one step in error. It prepares the way for another, and another. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." "Their word will eat as doth a canker."

Suppose the true doctrine of the Spirit's influence be invaded in another respect. Suppose it be asserted that the Spirit's work consists in giving man spiritual life, without any concern or agency of his own; that man is a mere machine, and has it not in his power to do otherwise than he does. What will follow legitimately from this position? In the first place, it will follow, that man, destitute of religion though he is, and whatever enormities he may practise, is yet the subject of no blame. Moral responsibility does not, and cannot, attach to him. In the second place it will follow, that God is chargeable with all the wrong there is in the universe. He has constructed different orders of mere machines, and set them in motion, and they cannot go otherwise than according to the impulse he has given them. If they go wrong, the wrong belongs to the prime and irresistible Mover. In the third place, it will follow, that God is very unreasonable and unjust in condemning any of his creatures. What could be more unreasonable, or unjust, than to condemn them, when, from the very constitution he has given them, they could not do otherwise than they have done? All this follows legitimately from so viewing the Spirit's work as to exclude the agency of man. How different from the teachings of the Bible on this subject. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." See the connexion of religious doctrines. When you destroy one, how the derangement spreads, and draws others in its train.

The same thing might be illustrated in reference to every fundamental doctrine of the Christian system.

And often doctrines of less note, and which seem little more than accidental, by being wrongly viewed, introduce great disorder. It was a sentiment of some ancient philosophers, and introduced somewhat into the early church, that matter is intrinsically evil, and the seat and origin of all the evil that exists. From this arose an un-

dervaluing of the human body, as composed of matter; and from this a denial of the resurrection. It could not be it was thought, that the soul would have any connexion with the body in a future state. Another consequence followed. The notice was adopted, that the Son of God, the Eternal Word, could not have taken matter into a connexion with himself: it would occasion defilement. And hence the opinion, that he only *seemed* to do this,—only *seemed* to be born, to live, to suffer, and die. His dwelling in flesh was only *appearance*, and not a reality. From this it followed, that there was no real *suffering* at all; and consequently no atonement for sin. In like manner, all the peculiar sympathy which Christ's incarnation qualifies him to feel for those who dwell in flesh, was destroyed. See Moshiem's Eccl. Hist. vol. I. p. 111. *Murdock's Translation.* And further still: Hence arose the whole system of self mortification, and self torture, which came into vogue in early monkish times. The destruction of the flesh was deemed the greatest merit, was more thought of than the righteousness of Christ, in the salvation of the soul. A system of self righteousness was brought in as a ground of hope, instead of the free grace of the Gospel. Thus, that one error, of making matter intrinsically evil—a mere wrong philosophic speculation, which it might seem would be very harmless—was yet, carried out in its influence through connected doctrines, the means of sapping the very foundations of the whole system of evangelical truth.

I might make the same remarks, substantially, in regard to the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, the doctrine of free justification through the righteousness of Christ received by faith, the unchangeableness of God's purposes of grace, and others of the Christian system. Not one of them can be denied, but derangement will ensue in a large circle of associated truths, and perhaps the whole character of the Gospel be changed.

IX. There is one other branch of the subject, which I will briefly notice. It is the doctrine of future retributions. Let this doctrine be denied. Let the ground be assumed, which sometimes is assumed, that men receive all their punishment for their sins in this life. What bearing does this have on the other doctrines of the Christian system?

In the first place, it destroys the doctrine of forgiveness. The Bible, as every reader of it knows, speaks largely of forgiveness.—"With thee there is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared," or "worshipped." "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him." And so on almost every page of the sacred record. Now if men receive full punishment for all their sins in this life, obviously no man is forgiven, and this doctrine of forgiveness is destroyed. Punishment and forgiveness do not go together. He that is punished, is not forgiven. He pays the debt, or meets the responsibility which the law lays upon him, and is free. The doctrine of forgiveness, therefore,—a

doctrine which pervades the whole Bible, and has been deemed one of its chief glories,—is, by the position above alluded to, utterly overthrown. God may proclaim, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins." But no, it is not so. These sweet passages, and others like them, are no longer true. God does not forgive. He exacts the penalty. There is absolutely no forgiveness in the world.

The sentiment, moreover, that all sin is punished in this life, makes Christ die in vain. Christ died with a view to forgiveness,—that "in his name should be preached repentance and remission of sins among all nations." But if all sin is punished, so that there is no forgiveness, what is the use of Christ's death? If every man receives in himself the punishment of his sins—pays the debt himself—why could he not as well do it without the death of Christ, as with it? The death of Christ evidently does him no good in this respect. Paying the debt himself, (the expression, of course, will be understood according to the subject,) he is his own savior. He is indebted for life to no other. This is a plain and inevitable consequence of the position, that all sin is punished in this life. We have no more to do, either with forgiveness of sins, or with a Savior's blood.

Nor is the difficulty relieved by taking the other ground sometimes resorted to, that there will be a temporary punishment beyond the grave, where those who have not received the due measure of recompense in this life, will have the balance meted out to them. This also leaves out of the account the doctrine of forgiveness, and the doctrine of the death of Christ. It only shifts the scene in part from the present to the future state. The principle is still the same. The sinner is punished according to his deserts, and then comes out from his imprisonment. To whom is he indebted for deliverance? Not to the free mercy and forgiving love of God, for God does not forgive, but exacts the punishment to the last mite. Not to the atoning death of Christ. That has not paid his dreadful death. He has paid the debt himself. He is under obligation, therefore, to himself, and to the sufferings he has endured, and to these alone, for his salvation. Instead of washing in the fountain set open for sin and uncleanness in the Gospel, he has cleansed his soul in purgatorial fires. When he comes out from his prison, therefore, he comes out shouting praises only to himself. And when he enters in through the gates into the city, he enters shouting praises only to himself, for the great achievement. He can join no song of redeeming love. He can tell of no grace; for grace has not been shown him.

And is there such a heaven as this? Is there a heaven, whose earth-born inhabitants do not acknowledge their indebtedness to Jesus? who do not acknowledge themselves washed in his blood? who do not sing of forgiveness, and behold the finishing of salvation, "with shoutings of grace, grace, unto it?" Then it is not the

heaven of the Bible. Some other revelation must contain the assurance of it. And some other happiness must exist there, different from that opened to the world by the Gospel.

There is one other consequence flowing from the sentiment brought to view. If it is possible for some men to gain heaven by suffering the full punishment deserved by their sins, then it is possible for all to gain heaven in the same way. Especially if it is possible for the more wicked and incorrigible, whom all the means of the present life could not subdue and reclaim, to expiate *their* guilt by a purgatorial process, and enter heaven, there is surely no impossibility in the salvation of those less guilty, on the same ground. The human race, then, are not lost. The Scriptures teach us that "the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." But it is not so. Every individual of the human race might save himself. The argument is conclusive. If the most wicked and abandoned, who reject Christ in the present life, and pursue all manner of evil, are capable of paying the dreadful debt they owe to the justice of God, and coming out from under his hand free, certainly the less wicked and the less abandoned are capable of doing the same. All men, therefore, might be ultimately happy on their own account,—standing on their own ground, on their own merits. This whole business of providing a Saviour for the world therefore, is all a needless work. The world would have been happy without it. Each individual could have been his own savior. And it is signally painful to see the innocent suffering for the guilty, when it was not needful; when the guilty might have borne the penalty as well, and accomplished the same end. Why did Jesus suffer, "the just for the unjust," if the unjust themselves, by sufferings could have secured the same objects? Why did Jesus pay the dreadful debt of the human race, if that race were competent themselves to pay their own debt, and rise to the heavenly glory without his interposing mercy?

I have but *suggested* thoughts in this discourse, to be pursued at your leisure. A mere glance at the different topics, is all that the time has allowed.

1. You will see, I trust, that there is a connection between the doctrines of religion. You will see that they form a system. Those mentioned—some of the leading—are a specimen in illustration of the principle, which applies to the whole. It is manifest that none of them can be touched, but the others will feel the influence. The beginning of denial, is "as when one letteth out water."

2. The subject shows us the importance of studying, with unprejudiced minds, and with great care, the doctrines of religion. No one doubts the value of the doctrines of science in its various branches. But no subject, after all, is of equal importance with the doctrines of religion—the science of immortality—the science of God, and his law, and the eternal life of the souls he has made. To commit error on any subject, is an evil. But to commit error

here, is to commit error of the greatest description possible. Even a small error, as it may appear to the inconsiderate, will be likely to spread its influence far and wide, and may lay waste all that is bright and fair in the enclosures of truth. Well, then, is the injunction, "In doctrine showing uncorruptness." Let pains be taken, that every thing may be viewed in the exact light in which God has placed it. "Search the Scriptures." Search with a desire to know. Search with prayer. Let the truth be prayed into the mind, and it will be likely to get there in its symmetry and proportion, and to work its appropriate results of eternal life.

3. The subject shows us the process by which some are led to reject the whole system of revealed truth. They did not mean, when they began, to proceed to such lengths. They loosened one stone of the arch, and that loosened another, and that another, till, perhaps before they were aware, the whole was prostrate at their feet. Priestly is, substantially, an instance of this. He himself makes the acknowledgment. Once, he tells us, he was "a Calvinist, and that of the strictest sect." Then he "became a high Arian, next a low Arian, and then a Socinian, and in a little time, a Socinian of the lowest kind." And after all, he adds, that he "does not know when his creed will be fixed." (See Magee on the Atonement, vol I. page 135.) Poor man! The ruins of the whole Christian system were lying around him, because he had pulled away the first stone. You have seen the mountain avalanche, stopped midway in its course. But its position is precarious. Every traveler fears to pass it. So is the man who has begun to slide from the foundations of truth. Something may have stopped him for a moment. But who does not expect to see him move again down the declivity? Men should beware how they begin departure from sound uncorrupted Christian doctrine. The end may be immensely different from what they imagine.

We have an illustration of this subject in our own community at the present day. Twenty years ago, a certain class of religious teachers, who had removed themselves from the foundation of their fathers, were told, that their course was downward, and that it would land them in virtual infidelity. They thought it unkind to be suspected of such tendency. But the result has fully verified the prediction. Christian ministers, so called, now stand up, even on this soil of the Pilgrims, and express their pain that a dying man should be found trusting in Christ for salvation. Christian ministers, so called, now stand up, and treat the Bible as little better than a collection of legendary tales. And a large circle of teachers still hold fellowship with them as regular and worthy ministers of Jesus Christ. O, who can tell whereto the beginnings of departure from uncorrupted doctrine will grow?

4. We see why it is that people who discard some one fundamental doctrine, or embrace some one fundamental error, even if they stop at this point, are yet, by this one wrong proceeding, pre-

vented from deriving due advantage even from those portions of truth which they attempt still to hold. Cases of this kind are sometimes witnessed. And the solution is to be sought on the principle we have been considering. The one doctrine discarded all the other doctrines are loosened, as they lie in the minds of these people, and fail thus entirely to make the impression they otherwise would make. Or the one error embraced, a baleful influence is shed by it over the whole mind and heart, creating a constant hindrance to a cordial following of the truth that is yet acknowledged. The system is mutilated; and, being mutilated, loses power. "Then shall I not be ashamed," says an ancient servant of God, "when I have respect unto ALL THY COMMANDMENTS." Let the system stand as God has ordained it. Neither add, nor diminish, nor vary. Then the whole will be harmonious, and, beyond description, glorious.

5. I simply add, that the doctrines of religion are of great practical moment. Bring together the points which have been suggested: the being of an infinitely perfect God; the inspiration of the Bible as an unerring revelation of his will to mankind; the universal providence of God; his wise and holy sovereignty in all his works; the immortality of the human soul; the deep and entire apostacy of the human race; the utterly lost condition of the world in itself; the supreme divinity of Jesus Christ, his atoning blood, and his all-sufficiency as a Saviour for the perishing; the doctrine of the Spirit, and his heavenly work on the hearts of free moral agents in their salvation; the retributions of an eternal state, giving the penitent, the reclaimed, the believer in Jesus, eternal life, but placing the impenitent, the unreclaimed, the rejecter of Jesus, where he "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." This is the system taught in the Bible, in its more prominent outlines. And this system claims, not only the attention of the intellect, but the homage of the heart, and the obedience of the life. God must be loved, and adored, and chosen as the portion of the soul. The Bible must be reverenced, and adhered to as "a light shining in a dark place." Sin must be acknowledged, repented of, forsaken. Christ must be accepted, believed on, followed. The Spirit must be prized, and sought, and cherished, and things offensive to his purity avoided. Heaven must be aspired after, and the energies of the soul directed to its attainment; while from destruction every one is required to give unceasing diligence to escape. "Flee from the wrath to come; lay hold on eternal life."

The subject is now with you. Heaven grant that you may make such use of it as will give you acceptance of it at the last day. Be not among the corrupters of the word of God. Be not among the deniers of the doctrine of Jesus. The world is a perishing world. Heaven has sent the Gospel to save its lost inhabitants from the second death. Accept the deliverance it brings you, and take the glory it reveals!

SERMON CCCXII.

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COMPLETENESS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." —II PETER i., 5–7.

THE formation of Christian character demands close attention. It will not of itself put on those features which are most desirable. If it is left to take the shape which surrounding influences will give to it, it will assume but very imperfectly the beautiful mould of the Gospel. If its formation is not cautiously directed, what it has not of the traits of a child of grace, rather than what it has, will command attention.

Grace in the heart is definite and operative, laying the foundation for a radical distinction of character. But while in one sense, it is a single principle, it manifests itself in a variety of Christian virtues. Each of these is with propriety called a grace. One can be marked in distinction from the others; these several qualities or exercises, being exhibited in different relations. The time will occur when each will be put in requisition. One may properly be said to be first—first in development, or first in command. Yet all have their important offices and relations, in which they will be necessarily acted out. One ray of light falls on the prismatic glass. It is reflected in different colors, plainly defined, yet each mingling with that which is next to it; all the necessary constituents of one ray of light. So are the manifestations of grace through the glass of the Christian character. The spiritual light is reflected in various moral colors, yet all necessary to the perfect representation of grace in the heart. For the exercise of these Christian virtues, the inspired penman gives command in the text: And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, (or courage, as some interpret the original) and to virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. Faith is that act of the soul which secures its safety in Christ; but the character of the Christian is not fully brought out, unless faith is attended with this sisterhood of the graces, and crowned with charity or love to all mankind. These are the ele-

ments that must be combined to form the character on the scriptural model.

The object of this discourse is, *to show the importance of aiming at completeness of Christian character.*

By completeness of Christian character, I do not mean that perfection in holiness, which implies the absence of all sin. This indeed is the standard of attainment which every good man must keep in view, and toward which he must direct his energies. Without detracting at all from the importance of this duty, the object now before us is designed to be distinct from this; looking at the harmony of the Christian character, as consisting in the presence of all its essential virtues, rather than the perfect growth of the whole. Neither is it supposed that in a complete character when attained, all the graces will appear equally prominent. The native temperament of an individual will affect more or less the cast of his character when he becomes a Christian. As his natural qualities are ardent and bold, or soft and gentle, they will stamp a characteristic impress on his piety. There are also peculiarities in the circumstances of Christians which demand an advance in some particular virtues, which, in other circumstances, would be subordinate in importance. I design to show the necessity of giving the several Christian virtues their appropriate place: that each may appear with that distinctness which belongs to it, among the features of a man of God in ordinary circumstances. Faith will not do without knowledge, nor knowledge without patience, nor these without temperance, brotherly kindness, and charity. The symmetry of the character will be destroyed, if each does not fill the place which is assigned to it. Instead of permitting the character to shoot out chiefly in one direction, let its progressive developments be kept in fair proportion. Instead of cultivating one quality, until, compared with the rest, it is overgrown, let all be nurtured according to scriptural proportions. Instead of forming a character which here and there, in spots, shall send out light, let it be that which like the disk of the sun shall send out a ray of light from every point in its surface.

I. This completeness of religious character is necessary, to give to it its attractive beauty and loveliness.

It is proper to speak of the beauty of piety. It is that which adorns, and purifies, and elevates man. The sweetness and grace which it confers, exceed all the accomplishments of fashion, or poetry, or philosophy. But when embodied in human character, an important element of its attraction, is the harmony of its parts. Each grace is indeed a pearl, in itself beautiful, fashioned and polished by the Holy Spirit; but all must be set together and in order in the coronet of piety, and thereby the lustre of each, and the glory of the whole are increased. The artist in his picture aims not only at variety of objects, but also at variety in the relative distances and colors on the canvass; that everything may be

in its place, and one thing, by alliance or opposition, set off another. The beauty of the human frame depends much on having every organ in proper position and size. A little deviation from these proportions is a deformity. The finest structure of mind is that in which all the faculties are cultivated and exercised according to their relative importance—no one neglected, no one in excess. This principle is obvious in its application to Christian character. To apply to the individual, the language in which the Spirit points to the whole church; the several parts of his piety should be as a body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love. If one spiritual organ is excessively prominent, it may startle and attract notice, like such a deformity in the natural body; but the comparative diminution of the other organs, equally important in their place, detracts from the beauty of the Christian's stature. In its several parts it is not fitly joined together, and there is not an effectual working in the measure of every part.

I may here refer to the moral beauty of the divine character. Every perfection of that character is in itself excellent and glorious. But there is a peculiar loveliness derived from the harmonious exhibition of the different attributes. They are thus exhibited in the material creation of God. In the scene where one of his attributes is especially manifested, in close proximity, or intermingled, we find traces of others. With the glory of his power is mingled the majesty of his wisdom; and hand in hand with these appears his infinite goodness. It is so also in God's moral administration. Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. In the most imposing scene in which God's mercy was ever revealed, his justice shone in its brightest display. In all the condescending acts of his kindness and grace, he shows his unsearchable greatness. This is an illustration of the principle now under consideration. Religious character possesses a moral beauty and attraction, where there is a completeness and harmony in its elements. It will arrest the attention of the world. It will be marked in its admirable fitness for every relation and circumstance of life; furnishing its possessor for every scene, whether of sorrow or of joy; for the hour of sickness, of persecution, of poverty, and of danger. It will invest his life and character with a daily beauty in the eyes of men, as he moves in the family circle, meeting its trials and discharging its trusts; as he engages in the business and intercourse of life, having all pervaded with the very spirit and law of the Gospel; and in the church, in the world, at home and abroad, in making his wealth and in using it, religion filling out every department of his character will impart to it peculiar loveliness. To such a trait of piety, God evidently directs attention, when he says by his prophet, "I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as

Lebanon, his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

II. Completeness of Christian character is important, *to convince men of the reality of religion.*

I am not about to take the side of the world in its neglect or denial of religion because of the imperfections of those who profess it. The system of Christianity in the Bible is complete—complete in its foundation and in its structure. If the character is fully moulded under its influence, it will also be complete. But mere human character has never taken the complete image and superscription of that Gospel system. The world judges of religion from its incomplete impression, rather than from its own perfect original form. That which is the defect of the man, they make the defect of the system. The system presents itself before the world in its original purity and excellence. It challenges examination and trial. Where is the defect in it? What single principle is wanting to make the character what it ought to be, if all its principles are practically adopted and illustrated? If its full power were received, would it not sanctify every living energy, and impress every lovely quality? Oh, that men could look at the gospel as it is, in its own inherent excellence and glory!

But it is still true that the professors of religion must be regarded in an important sense as its representatives, appointed to illustrate its principles, to prove their reality and power. Hence it is all-important that they overlook no one of those principles. It is not the fanatic, running wild with some single element of the gospel, who is made the standard of judgment by the world. When he makes so much of faith, to the neglect of the other graces, that he determines to live by it without labor, professing to confide in the God of Elijah to take care of him; men set it to the account of human weakness, rather than against the reality of religion. It is that absence of some of the Christian virtues in the ordinary relations of life, with which superstition or mental weakness is not chargeable, which awakens their doubts. It is the fact that one part of the Christian's life or character is so far from agreeing with the other. You may select examples on every side. The individual who shines with generosity and compassion, who drops the tribute of charity at the poor man's door, ever ready to lift a hand and open his treasures to relieve the miserable, in so doing illustrates an important Christian virtue. But as you move around with him in the circles of life, perhaps you see him the subject of violent angry passion, or hear him whispering in corners against others, or see him touching secret springs, that he may obtain advantage to himself at the expense of his neighbor. He may be one who is zealous in temperance, but is destitute of brotherly kindness, being censorious in speech. Perhaps he is a man of wealth, who prays for the coming of Christ's kingdom and the conversion of the world, but he is vigilant to escape the calls which

are made for a portion of his property to promote this object, and yet he professes to have consecrated himself and all that he has to God. Is he a student in the midst of ungodly companions? I recall such an one; he was ever deeply solicitous for the spiritual welfare of his associates; willing to bear reproach, and even rejoicing in it. But at the commencement of many a day, he resolved that he could best serve God for that day, in the neglect of his studies and the regular duties of college. Is he a man of courage, bold in reproving and opposing sin, perhaps he is destitute of that patience, which endureth reproach—dictating the "soft answer, which turneth away wrath."

Many are the illustrations that might be gathered from the Christian church, showing how the testimony of its members to the reality of religion is weakened by their inconsistencies. One aspect of their character witnesses for it, but to an uncharitable world, the other witnesses against it. When that character shall come any where near to an exemplification of every department of piety, with what an overwhelming voice will the truth go to the hearts of sinners. Is it too much to hope, professed followers of Christ, that you feel in some degree your responsibility to set forth an illustration of these several attributes of character? But on examination, can you not discover that you are permitting a breach in this circle of graces, which is visible to the world, and which by diligence and prayer might be supplied? And is it not possible that by so doing you might carry conviction to the mind of an impenitent friend, that would result in his salvation? Ponder, I pray you, these questions—as they bear on your character, as a parent, as a man of business, as a Sabbath school teacher, in social, in public life.

III. Completeness of Christian character is necessary to the most vigorous and useful action.

Vigor of Christian character is desirable; for in proportion to its vigor will be the influence that goes out from it to bless man. When the apostle has given the injunction in the text to cultivate these several graces, he adds, "For if these things be in you and abound, they make you, that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." They are all essential to the power of the Christian. Who, for the sake of attaining the greatest amount of physical force, would seek to have any single part of the body grow to a size disproportionate to the other parts? Is there not such a connection between the different parts, that in a vigorous effort, the strength of the whole is rallied? Can the hand say to the foot, I have no need of thee? By exercising one part more than another its power will be increased; but a strong man is one whose whole muscular energy is great. The same is true of the faculties of the mind. The mind is most vigorous, comprehensive and sure in its action, in which all the powers are trained according to their relative importance.

The same is true of the spiritual man. One grace cannot say to another, I have no need of thee; for each grace is needful to complete the stature of the man. A Christian's greatest moral power is derived from the union of all the graces; it is diminished by the absence of one of them. A single defect will prevent that consolidation of character, so necessary to its strength.

Let it be supposed, that a person selects a single quality, for example, courage, as that which he will most carefully nurture, to the comparative neglect of the milder graces of patience, brotherly kindness and charity; and you will have a character destitute of some most essential features of resemblance to Christ. He will, of course, dare to say any thing; but he will say many things that had better not be said, or in such a way, that they will do no good. He will dare to do any thing—many things which another might not dare to do; but it is almost certain that some things which he will do, had better be undone. Having a single spiritual faculty, a bold one, prominently developed, he will assuredly make himself felt when he moves and speaks, but it will be often with such effects as are witnessed when the equilibrium in the elements is destroyed. Such a condensation of power in one point, will create a commotion, and without a counteracting influence it will spread desolation. Suppose the grace be one of an opposite character, as that which the Christian will mainly cultivate, and he will present another example of the loss of moral power. He may not do as much positive injury as the one just mentioned, and perhaps not as much positive good. He will be apt to hesitate and falter in those important duties, where sacrifices are demanded and reproach must be endured. That which will put forth the most beneficial and effective energy, is the well balanced character, in which all the Christian qualities are combined, so that each may exert its appropriate influence. That which by itself would make a man a lion, is modified by that which would make a man a sloth. A church composed of persons whose character is formed after such a model, we do not see. It is, however, a point of attainment towards which you should aim as professed servants of Christ, and bound to live for the salvation of men.

Such strength and weight of character as Christians, are greatly needed. The circumstances of the age are such, as inevitably to call out the professed friends of the Savior. Let them come forth qualified for the work that is to be done—for steady, vigorous, persevering action. Let them seek the knowledge to discern duty, the courage and patience with which to overcome difficulties in the path of duty; and all those other qualities which shall carry conviction to the world of the truth and value of piety. The church will then not only be beautiful as Tirzah, and comely as Jerusalem, but terrible to her enemies as an army with banners. Then the Christian, like the cedars of Lebanon, will cast forth his roots deep and wide. He will not break or bend at every blast. He will stand

a firm and well proportioned pillar in the temple. With the panoply of grace, the sword, the shield, the helmet and the breastplate, he will be prepared to meet the enemy. He will combine the qualities which are needful for the healthiest, strongest moral power.

1. This subject may throw some light on the dispensations of God to his people in the present world. We often fail to mark the bearing of events, as they are ordered by God, on our present good. We know that God by his providences designs to arrest sinners and bring them to repentance. Is it not equally plain, that when they have become his children, he uses such means to promote their spiritual growth? If the prosperous are self-sufficient in their prosperity, you often see their heads bowed by some unexpected reverse, that they may not learn to forget God, in the enjoyment of their earthly blessings; as well as learn the duty of dispensing to those in need. The Christian is sent to the chamber of sickness that he may learn patience. He is now made to struggle with poverty, and here and there permitted to take some unexpected supply from the hand of Providence, that he may be taught to trust in God. He is surrounded with objects of misery, that he may learn to exercise benevolence. In a word, he is kept a little while in this world, before he is taken to Heaven, that by its wants and woes, by personal enjoyment and suffering, as well at times by hard service, his character may be brought out in all those virtues which the Gospel requires. Our Heavenly Father lays his hand upon the child, *when* it is best, and *where* it is best, to test and to strengthen his graces. Never forget then to study providence, and faithfully apply its lessons.

2. This subject points to the responsibility of ministers of the Gospel, to whom is committed especially the training of Christian character. A minister can exert a vast influence on the piety of a company of young converts, committed to his charge. If that influence is misdirected, he may so affect their early growth, while yet babes in Christ, that when they become men, they will present an unsightly deformity. Suppose that he is bent on making a company of bold and fearless spirits, as they certainly ought to be; there is danger that in looking singly at that, he will send forth a class of vain-glorious disciples, knowing more than their teachers. He ought to accomplish his object without such a result. He may do it by carefully keeping the balance of character—promoting the development of the several graces in their appropriate place.

Here you will perceive the importance of that most difficult work of the minister, the rightly dividing the word of truth. The word of God is an essential means of sanctification. "Sanctify them through thy truth." The system of Gospel truth possesses an admirable fitness to call forth and improve the Christian virtues. It is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness—to educate the character in all its parts. It has milk for babes, and strong meat for men. It has eyes for the blind

and feet for the lame. It has counsel for the young, and support for the aged. It has encouragement for the timid and tempted—strength for the weak, and restraint for the proud and overbearing. This word the preacher must open and apply with a wise regard to the necessities of character. The ministry will assuredly leave its impression on the character of the church. The pulpit is now giving a mould to the piety of the advancing generation of Christians. If they are called to look at and exercise chiefly but one class of graces, they will be a generation of Christians, with a one-sided character. The tendency of their action will be to destroy the balance and order of the moral world—as they will be prone to see objects with a somewhat distorted vision, and to do things out of place and out of time. Again: If the pastor take these children in the family of Christ, and attempt to force their growth; putting them at once in the foremost rank, where men ought to stand who have strong muscle and sinew already formed, the consequence will be that under such hot-house culture, they will soon become pale and sickly, and never put on health and vigor. Just as the too early taxing of the promising infant mind, has often made it for life a miserable dwarf. It is no unimportant part of a minister's work to edify the body of Christ. This is among the best gifts to be earnestly coveted. It is not a department of labor that will excite so much noise and observation, as some others. But a faithful pursuit of it will prove at last to have exerted a vast instrumentality in turning the world to God.

3. The view taken of this subject, suggests one reason why Christians are so frequently destitute of satisfactory evidence of union to Christ. They see many hours when it is a serious question with them, "Are we the children of God?" They try to decide the question by an examination of their feelings, motives and actions; and by comparing them with the word of God. Perhaps, here and there, they find what appears to be a feature of resemblance to Christ. But so many important features are not manifested, they are led to doubt whether those which *seem* to be such, are the real traces of the divine image.

From the tenor of the Bible, we infer that the generic principle of piety is love. This, however, comprehends various holy exercises, according to the relations in which the Christian is viewed; or according to the objects toward which the heart is directed. Love is the spring of obedience. Hence in testing the heart as to the existence of love to God, the life must be examined in all the situations to which the commands of God reach. When you, as a Christian, find some departments of known duty totally neglected in certain points, you have no conscientious regard to the will of God; is not the voice of evidence of other sources, that you are a child of God, almost silenced? And ought you not to be alarmed? Is there some field of duty to which the Gospel plainly directs your attention, which you do not love? Are you so insensible to the

condition of dying sinners around you, that you do nothing for their salvation? Are you so indifferent to the woes of the perishing heathen, that you scarcely lift a hand, and give but a pittance, that the Gospel may be sent to them? As you go over all the commands of God, as they touch your life, at home, in the church, among the ignorant, poor and perishing, are you insensible and inactive, concerning any of these positive claims? If you are, does not Christ say to you, "How dwelleth the love of God in you? Why call ye me, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Can you expect a faithful trial of your character to produce any thing but shame, and confusion, and dismay, if you are not striving daily to do the will of God in all things?

4. This subject shows the necessity of untiring effort on the part of Christians,—"*giving all diligence.*" With this language the text begins. The nature of the duty requires this diligence. Perhaps you are young in the Christian life, and it is with you a day of things in grace. Giving all diligence, you can make great attainments. That infant at first most feeble, does often outstrip the one of high promise. The same is true of some parts of the body, which in early life were more feeble than others. Special culture being directed to them, they at length become the stronger. The Christian is often an example of a like change in the progress of his different faculties. If you find a grace wanting or peculiarly feeble, bring that point of your character under your special daily attention, and directly under the cultivations of the Spirit and the truth. Christ receives the weak in faith, but not to slothfulness. Whatever be your age in the Christian life, remember the injunction, "giving all diligence," add—*keep adding.* Draw largely on Christ, from whom you must derive all your completeness. Receive and apply the promise which he gives with every command; and seek the grace which he is ready to bestow with every providence. Then from weakness, you will wax strong. Probably some of the stars which now shine brightest in the firmament of glory, began to shine here with as feeble and twinkling a radiance as yours, but until the end, grace proved to be in them like the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 12. Vol. XV.) . DECEMBER, 1841. (Whole No. 180.

SERMON CCCXIII.

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MORAL INSANITY OF IRRELIGIOUS MEN.

"*Madness is in their heart.*"—Ecclesiastes ix. 3.

The language of the sacred writers is nowhere more awful, than when they describe the character and the condition of ungodly men. In the deep emotion which this subject awakens, they reject the ordinary forms of expression, and resort to the most glowing imagery, to give utterance to the fearful thoughts which crowd upon them. Agreeably, they represent the wicked as "dead in trespasses and sins,"—"sowing the wind, and reaping the whirlwind,"—"treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath," —tossed on a "troubled sea," where raging waves and hidden rocks, and whirlpools, and darkness surround them,—or standing upon giddy and slippery heights, beneath which yawns the gulf of perdition.

But in this accumulation of dreadful metaphors none are more terribly significant than the one contained in the text. What spectacle can be more appalling than that of madness? Look at the man, in whose mind the golden cord, which holds the intellectual powers in harmony, has been taken and left him a maniac. What a wreck of all that is lovely and valuable in humanity does he exhibit! To the calm control of reason, have succeeded the dominion of passion, the empire of fancy, and the anarchy of delirium. The eye, which once shone with the clear light of thought, now gleams with unnatural fire, or is fixed in the unmeaning gaze of idiocy; and the countenance, once beaming with intellect, and radiant with the glow of every noble affection, is vacant with stupor, or convulsed with the ravings of insanity. What extravagance and recklessness mark his actions! Behold him bartering his dearest interests for a childish toy—laboring to accomplish enterprises in their nature evidently unattainable, or using the greatest exertions to effect the most frivolous purposes—continually mistaking the objects around him, esteeming those valuable which are really trivial, and rejecting as worthless those of the highest value—flying from his friends and relatives as enemies, and caressing strangers and enemies as friends —rejoicing when his situation is most melancholy, and weeping when he has no cause for sorrow—wantonly exposing himself to

dangers; and, perhaps, in the frenzy of distraction, leaping from a precipice, or plunging a dagger into his bosom. Who, without a thrill of horror, can witness a scene like this? Yet such is the image which inspiration has selected as emblematical of the conduct of impenitent sinners. Having surveyed, with a rapid and comprehensive glance, the history of those who live "without God in the world," it has sketched the portraiture of their character, in few, but fearfully graphic words. "Madness is in their heart." Surely, none but a pencil dipped in heaven could have flung upon the canvas so vivid and so true a likeness in so brief a compass.

The sentiment, which the text presents as the subject of discourse, *is the moral insanity of irreligious men.*

In the illustration of this topic, it is my purpose to mention some of the prominent characteristics of insanity, and to show that the views and conduct of the wicked, with respect to religion, exhibit the same melancholy tokens.

I. *It is a mark of insanity to be insensible to the force of evidence.* A sound mind is open to conviction,—perceives the proofs submitted to its examination,—estimates their value,—and regulates its conclusions according to their clearness and cogency. Wherever, therefore, an utter inapprehension of argument and testimony is discovered, it is manifest that there folly has usurped the "intellectual throne." If a man, in defiance of his consciousness, should assert that his own existence was imaginary;—that the sun did not shine, nor the seasons change,—or that the living and real world around him was only a vast panorama of magical illusions,—the most unreflecting observer would at once pronounce him insane. But the infidel, who denounces religion as an imposture, betrays an infatuation equally unequivocal. He rejects the being and government of God: denies the future existence and accountability of man; discards, as baseless dreams, the momentous facts, sublime precepts, and stupendous disclosures of Revelation; and charges the believer in these doctrines with a blind devotion to absurd and incredible dogmas. But notwithstanding the confidence with which he avows his skepticism, a slight survey of the grounds on which it rests, will demonstrate that he has little claim to the boast of sagacity. The truths which he repudiates, are surrounded by a body of evidence so decisive as to render them no less certain and irresistible than the plainest subject of pure intuition. God has imprinted his signature upon the broad expanse of the universe. Earth, with its varied loveliness and fertility—ocean, in the sublimity of its storms, and the majesty of its repose—and heaven, with the mechanism of its countless worlds,—proclaim his wisdom, power, and goodness. The whole creation, from the smallest flower that blushes in the valley, to the mightiest globe that wheels through the firmament, sends up a causeless anthem to its Maker and Governor; and calls, with every voice of its unnumbered choir, upon revolted, ingrate man, to acknowledge

and adore his perfections. Superadded to this testimony of external nature, God has implanted in the human bosom an innate consciousness of his existence and sovereignty—a feeling of responsibility to him—and a vivid presentiment of final retribution—which endure through every change, unextinguished and inextinguishable. Darkness cannot conceal, infidelity cannot stifle, the constant corrosion of sin cannot destroy them. They live in the deep fountains of the soul; and there are moments in the history of the most hardened unbeliever, when they break, with irrepressible force, through all his opposing sophistries. Nor is this all. With a view to illustrate more fully what reason, instructed by his works, and the moral sense of his creatures might teach, and to disclose what lies beyond their vision, he has given to the world a perfect revelation of all that is necessary for the subjects of his government to know during their earthly probation. He has unveiled, in the most luminous manner, his character and will; his relation to men, and his claims to their obedience; their entire and universal apostasy from him, and exposure to the sentence of his violated law; the provision of infinite love for their restoration to his favor by the blood of his Son shed upon the cross; the eternal felicity of those who embrace this merciful overture, and the inevitable perdition of all who neglect it. The Volume, in which these affecting disclosures are promulgated, is evinced to be of divine authority, by an overwhelming accumulation of the most conclusive proofs. Its agreement with secular history; its accordance with the physical and spiritual condition of the world; its exact prediction of numerous events ages before their occurrence; its impressive display of unquestionable miracles; the holy lives, supernatural gifts, fervid zeal, untiring labors, and voluntary sufferings of its writers; the ethereal beauty of its style; the moral elevation of its sentiments; the harmony, unearthly purity, and sanctifying influence of its doctrines; all conspire to attest its heavenly origin. Thus inscribed with the name, and stamped with the seal of God, it has passed victorious through every trial of its truth, and every attempt to refute its pretensions. Deathless as the Eternal Spirit from whom it emanated—invulnerable as the sacred bush, burning but not consumed—it has survived, unharmed, the fires of persecution, and the ravages of time. Opposition, in every form, has been arrayed against it. Wit and ridicule—perverted learning and misguided talent—secret treachery and open malice—dungeons, racks, and flames—and every weapon which human ingenuity could devise, or the magazines of hell supply—have been combined, in one fell assault, to sweep it from the earth. But, fixed on its immovable basis, it has sustained the storm, unshaken as the fast-seated rock that hurls back the angry waves. Or if, for a moment, the swelling flood has seemed to overflow it, it has arisen from the temporary submersion in serener majesty, and with more impregnable strength.

If, then, the witnesses to the truth of religion are so numerous and irrefragable, how infatuated is the man who discredits their testimony. Such incredulity can proceed only from that madness of the soul which the text describes. In unison with this statement, an inspired writer declares, that "*in his heart*"—not in the deliberate conviction of his understanding—"the fool hath said, There is no God." And how universally is this declaration exemplified in the process by which infidels are made. By far, the larger portion of those who become such, have scarcely ever read the Bible, and know as little of its contents as of the Koran or the Shaster. Delirious with the love of sin, and impatient of every check to its indulgence, they reject without ceremony a book, whose precepts contravene their inclinations, and whose sanctions reprobate their profligacy. And even the few who have pretended to examine it, have been so strongly biased by a latent enmity to its doctrine, as to be utterly incompetent to pass upon it an impartial judgment. And when we see the young, the ignorant, and the abandoned, thus wilfully turning away from the light which beams, with overpowering splendor, from the works and the word of God, merely because they hate it, and will not come to it, lest, in its all-disclosing radiance, their "deeds should be reproved," can we doubt the insanity of their hearts? They may exult in their unbelief as a proof of their triumph over vulgar prejudice, and glory in their freedom from the restraints of conscience and revelation; but to the spiritually instructed mind their conduct appears indescribably preposterous. It is the madness of the mariner, who, casting away his chart and compass, and extinguishing every beacon that can guide or warn him, launches his vessel upon a sea wild with tempest, and covered with darkness. Nay, more, it is the madness of the man, who, if he were able, would blot every luminary from the sky, and shroud the universe in eternal midnight.

II. *It is a mark of insanity to be unconcerned while in a state of doubt with respect to momentous interests.* If a man, who considered his temporal circumstances in such a critical posture, that the next hour might sink him in the lowest poverty and disgrace, or elevate him to the pinnacle of wealth and honor, should make no exertions to remove their uncertainty, but recklessly leave them to their course, he would be deemed utterly destitute of common sense and prudence. And yet there are multitudes, who, with reference to the welfare of our souls, exhibit a similar fatuity. They are not absolute unbelievers. They confess themselves unable to prove that religion is false; but, at the same time, aver, that they find it equally impossible to demonstrate its reality. They waver between infidelity and faith; and justify their indecision by asserting that every thing connected with the spiritual world is enveloped in obscurity. That, their only difficulty, however, lies in the waywardness and obliquity of their hearts, is evident from the fact, that while a

slight examination would convince them of the truth of the gospel, they refuse to investigate its claims, but treat the "great salvation" with contempt, when pressed upon their notice. They acknowledge that the period of their earthly sojourn is brief and precarious—that a life, frail as a thread of gossamer, is the only gossamer between them and heaven, or hell, or annihilation—and, that death, which threatens them every moment, must, in a few years, and may, in a few days, place them unchangeable and forever, in one of these conditions. Their doubts, therefore, are upon a subject of most tremendous consequence—a subject relating, not to the affairs of their fugitive existence here, but to their eternal destiny beyond the grave. From this destiny it is in vain for them to turn aside their thoughts, as if they could avert it by denying it a place in their imagination. In spite of their heedlessness, it advances certainly and speedily; and soon the curtain which conceals it will be lifted, and disclose to their view an endless state of ineffable bliss, of burning agony, or of nothingness. Now, surely, in a dubious point of this solemn nature, it might be expected that every rational man would endeavor, if possible, to obtain a relief from his doubts; and that he could not remain an instant at rest, while in suspense about a question of such transcendent importance, that, in comparison, with it, every sublunary interest dwindles into insignificance. Impelled by the stupendous magnitude of the problem to be determined, he would concentrate every faculty upon its solution, and manifest, an all-absorbing solicitude, till he had brought his inquiries to a satisfactory issue. But, instead of this, the individuals we are describing, take no pains to settle their doubts. They appear easy and composed with respect to them. They may even avow them with levity, and perhaps gratify their pride in professing them, as if it were an indication of superior wisdom to be uncertain whether their ultimate award shall be a throne of joy, a rack of punishment, or a dreamless oblivion. What language can supply a name for such inconceivable folly? Yet, in relation to worldly objects, you see them very different men. They use the utmost dilligence to secure their property. They guard, with anxious care, against the remotest contingency of bodily suffering. They fear the smallest inconveniences, see them as they approach, and feel them if they arrive. They pass whole days and nights in chagrin and despair at some frivolous disappointment in their secular pursuits, or some imaginary blemish in their reputation. And still, while they admit the appalling possibility that the terrors of perdition hang over them, they continue without disquiet or emotion. This wonderful insensibility to concerns of the highest moment, and that, too, in minds so keenly alive to the meanest trifles, is an astonishing prodigy—a preternatural hallucination; an unparalleled and deplorable anomaly—which can be accounted for only by the fact, that "the

heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart."

III. *Insanity is characterized by false perceptions.* As the eye, clouded by disease, sees the objects presented to it in vague and distorted attitudes; so the mind, bereft of reason, mistakes what it perceives, and gives an unnatural aspect to every thing which it contemplates. The same feature is eminently conspicuous in the views of the wicked with respect to religious subjects. They entertain erroneous conceptions of God. Blind to the discoveries of his character and the proofs of his ubiquity, which meet them on every side, they regard him rather as the unknown sovereign of some distant world, whose relation to themselves and whose claims to their services are remote and indefinite—than as the Being in whom they live, by whose goodness they are sustained, by whose all-pervading presence they are surrounded, whose law they are sacredly bound to obey, and at whose bar they must receive their final and irrevocable sentence. His dispensations and government appear, to their darkened vision, in confused and unreal colors. They consider him cruel and tyrannical, demanding what they have no power to perform, and he has no right to require; or else, as so lenient and flexible in his nature, and so indifferent to the conduct of his creatures, that he will never inflict upon them the punishment due to their sins. Thus they deem the holy and infinite Jehovah "altogether such an one as themselves." Equally absurd are their views of Christ. The adorable Redeemer, in whom every divine perfection is embodied, whose beauty is the light and bliss of heaven, and whose smile fills with inexpressible rapture, the bosom of the highest angel—possesses, in their jaundiced eyes, no excellence to excite their admiration, and no charms to attract their love. His cross, around which, as their common centre, all the glories of the Godhead cluster, has for them no interest. They look upon his gospel as replete with severe restrictions, painful sacrifices, and repulsive duties—revile its disciples as the votaries of a gloomy fanaticism—and scorn the heavenly graces it inculcates and produces, as the offspring of bigoted ignorance, or designing hypocricy. Nor is the estimate which they form of their own condition and prospects, less unfounded and extravagant. Like the maniac, who, in the vagaries of his distempered fancy, imagines his cell a palace, his rags a royal robe, his crutch a sceptre, and himself a king, they cherish the fatal delusion, that they are pure in the sight of God, invested with a title to his favor, and traveling to the mansions of his love, while they are deeply stained with the bliss or wo to their possessor—the unconverted thoughtlessly neglect, or wantonly squander. Look abroad through society, and see, in what innumerable instances, the powers and facilities which God has conferred on men to enable them to obey his Gospel, promote his glory, and work out their own salvation, are lavished on the paltry objects of this sordid world. Behold the

guilt of unforgiven sin, and hurrying, with ever-quickened speed, to the consummation of their doom in the lake of fire. Now, when we see men, in other respects, clear-sighted and sagacious —gifted, it may be, with a keenness and accuracy of perception, that enable them to penetrate, at a glance, the most difficult questions in secular affairs—thus losing, whenever their attention is directed to religion, all their wonted acuteness, committing the most egregious mistakes, confounding the most dissimilar thing, and betraying an utter want of discrimination and judgment; it is impossible to resist the conclusion, that some great moral derangement has impaired their understanding, and blunted the visual faculty of the soul.

IV. *It is a mark of insanity to waste noble powers upon trivial objects.* The man whose intellect is disordered, does not distinguish between things which are important, and those that are frivolous; and, consequently, employs himself as readily upon the latter as upon the former. Thus Shakspeare describes the frantic Lear as gathering straws with the hand that had wielded a sceptre, and devoting to the follies of drivelling idiocy a mind which once gave laws to a kingdom. And, in like manner, the sacred historian informs us, that the monarch of Babylon, when smitten with mental aberration, abandoned the occupations and abodes of men, and betook himself to the pursuits and the companionship of irrational animals. But however painful it may be to witness such a debasement of the human faculties, it is far more so to contemplate that to which depravity has subjected them: because the one, being involuntary, may exist without crime, and is limited in its effects to the present life; while the other is wholly the result of a guilty choice, and in its consequences takes hold on eternity. Men are formed with capacities which render them susceptible of the knowledge and love of God, of increasing conformity to his will and devotion to his service,—till, being prepared by the atoning and purifying grace of the Redeemer, "for the inheritance of the saints in light," they enter upon that infinite course of intellectual and moral improvement, in which the glorified spirit, freed from the encumbrance of flesh, and the blinding influence of sin, shall learn more and more of its adorable Creator, exhibit an over-growing resemblance to his character, and rise, through all the ages of its immortal career, to a higher and yet higher elevation in wisdom, holiness, and felicity. But these vast capacities—so legibly inscribed with the benign intention of their author—so expressive of the original dignity of man—and so pregnant with votaries of wealth, in their struggles for the gold that eludes their grasp, or, when obtained, cankers and corrodes their bosoms, displaying an ardor, and diligence, and carefulness, which if devoted to the attainment of the "true riches," might give them a title to that "treasure in heaven," which no rust can soil, and no accident destroy. Observe with what a concentration of their energies the devotees of ambition toil for the fame which

a breath creates, and a breath may extinguish—evincing a prudence and forecast, a contempt of difficulties, and a singleness of purpose, worthy of a nobler aim; and which, employed upon the concerns of the soul, would raise them to the glory and immortality of the sons of God. Survey, too, the crowds of giddy triflers that flutter in the train of fashion, or congregate at the shrine of gaity. See them expending upon the decoration of their persons, or in the pursuit of empty amusements, pains and labor, which, if directed to a religious end, might clothe their guilty spirits in the spotless robe of a Saviour's righteousness, and fit them for that "presence in which there is fulness of joy," and for that "right hand where there are pleasures for evermore." These are only a few among the almost numberless examples of perverted talents and wasted opportunities, with which the history of an apostate world abounds. And what pious and contemplative observer, when he views such examples, and sees the heirs of eternity degrading their lofty faculties from the glorious purposes for which they were given, to the vile service of vanity and sin, is not filled with amazement at their infatuation? Can they be intelligent and rational beings, who thus cherish the body, but neglect the soul—court the approbation of men, but disregard that of God—and drink at the streams of polution, while they shun the pure fountains of life and joy? Are they endowed with minds designed for everlasting growth and expansion, and able to soar, with a strong and unfaltering wing, upward to their Eternal Source, and vie with angels in their flight? How mournful, then, is that madness of the soul, which palsies such ethereal powers, and chains to the dust a creature capable of such an exalted destiny!

V. *Insanity betrays itself by an indifference to happiness.* Every sane man is prompted by the instinctive principle of self-love, to desire his own welfare. If, therefore, you saw an individual, in opposition to this impulse of his nature, careless alike whether he enjoyed or suffered, resisting every attempt to improve his circumstances, and rejecting as worthless the richest blessings, you would justly consider him deprived of his senses. A similar, though far more fatal want of reason, is visible in the apathy of impenitent sinners with respect to their eternal happiness. The bodies, which they here inhabit, must soon be laid in the grave; but their undying spirits, with all their mighty and ever-increasing susceptibilities of joy and sorrow, will survive the stroke of death, and be ushered into the unchanging realities of heaven or hell. While unregenerate, they are at war with their Maker, and condemned by his righteous law to endless punishment. But to reclaim them from this guilty and perilous state, God has shed the blood of his own Son as an expiation for their sins, and, on the terms of repentance and faith in the Mediator, offers them full and free forgiveness, the consolations of his grace on earth, and interminable bliss in his kingdom above. This overture of matchless compassion is urged upon their acceptance by the

most impressive motives. In language of melting kindness their heavenly Father addresses them—points them to the sun-bright summit, where angelic thrones await their arrival—proffers them his own wisdom to guide, and his own power to strengthen them in the arduous ascent—bears long and patiently with their grievous provocations—holds back the uplifted thunder, and cries, "How shall I give them up? How shall I make them as Admah? How shall I set them as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." With a persuasion equally subduing, the Saviour pleads with them. He presents his Godlike form scarred with the scourge and the cross. He displays to their view the crowns of life and the seats of Paradise which he has made accessible to mortals; and entreats them, with all the eloquence of his boundless love, not to reject the inestimable benefits purchased for them by his dying agonies. The Spirit, too, speaking in the voice of providence, the whispers of conscience, and the messages of holy truth, calls upon them to come to the "waters" of salvation; while the Bride, the regenerated church of Christ, repeats the call, and prolongs it in her efforts and prayers. Thus are the wicked pressed on every side to turn and live, by incentives and solicitations that might move a heart of adamant. But amid these multiplied and cogent appeals, they remain unaffected, despise the joy that is "full of glory," and trample on the priceless boon of divine beneficence. And why? Is it that they are already sufficiently happy? Be it so, that basking in the sunshine of prosperity, rioting in affluence, and cheered by the flatteries of a delusive world, they live at ease in their possessions. Is this happiness? Can it satisfy the yearnings of their immortal nature? Can it secure them from outward calamity, or inward disquietude? Will it support them when the touch of the Almighty withers their hopes; or soothe the anguish and allay the terrors of their dying hour? No; the earthly enjoyments of irreligious men are not happiness. Their cup of pleasure is mingled with gall. The chaplet of honor on their brows is interwoven with thorns. Their highest worldly advantages are only a source of splendid misery. There is, there can be, no peace to the wicked. Wherever they turn, a dreadful sound is in their ears. Amid the din of business, the slumber of carelessness, the song of mirth, and the whirl of dissipation, they hear a voice of warning, and see a hand writing their doom, in characters fearful as those which were traced by the finger of God on the wall of Belshazzar's palace. Why, then, do they neglect the blessings of the gospel? Is it that they have no power to obtain them? Are they compelled to behold them from afar, as we gaze upon those remote stars which, however they may be the bright abodes of other beings, can never be ours? No. Christ has brought these blessings within their reach. They have only to believe in him, and heaven is theirs. And yet, though salvation is thus easy, and though they are wretched without it, they will not come to

the Redeemer, that they may have life. Do they say that they intend to apply to him at a more convenient season? But are they certain of living till that season arrives? Who has given them a guaranty, that the pulse, which now beats strong within them, will not to-morrow be still in death, the color of their cheek exchanged for a mortal paleness, and their bodies attired for the sepulchre? Or, if this should not be the case, what assurance have they that the period of their probation will not then be closed? Even at the moment when they are resolving to presume yet longer upon the divine forbearance, and to suspend their eternal felicity on the issue of that presumption, their insulted God may give them up to their own hearts' lust, and swear in his wrath that they shall not see his rest. Where, then, can we find a parallel to the infatuation of sinners, while they thus trifle with the welfare of their souls? There was a profane Esau who sold his birthright for a morsel of meat, and a heathen Lysimachus who renounced his kingdom for a draught of water. But their folly was wisdom compared with that of those who barter the bliss of immortality for the gratifications of sense.

VI. *Insanity is evinced by a recklessness of danger.* If you saw a man standing on a volcano, and manifesting no alarm, while the restless heavings of its imprisoned fires gave indubitable presage of an eruption at hand, you would, without hesitation, conclude that he was insane. But incomparably more amazing is the indifference of the unconverted to the far greater perils by which they are encompassed. He whose declarations will infallibly be fulfilled, has said that "the wicked shall be turned into hell"—that "they, who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Chist, shall be punished with everlasting destruction"—that "he that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." By these circumstances of imminent jeopardy all the impenitent are surrounded. Above them hangs the bolt of vengeance suspended by a single hair. Behind them a life stained with sin follows them to the judgment. Before them blazes the sword of inexorable justice. Beneath them rolls the blackness of darkness. And yet, in this appalling condition, they dream of safety, and walk undismayed on the brink of wo. With terrific rapidity, they float down the stream of sin towards the gulf of despair. But though the current, as they advance, grows deeper and stronger; though the roar of "the troubled lake," in which it terminates, becomes, every moment, nearer and louder; though Infinite Love calls upon them to return while yet they may, reminds them of the millions who have perished on that river of death, and discloses to their view the abyss at its end;—still they pursue their fatal voyage and glide merrily along the treacherous waters that are fast sweeping them away to perdition. What illustration can be found for insanity like this? Behold on the top of that burning building, an individual surveying, with careless unconcern, the progress of the flames, making no effort to escape from his hazardous po-

tion, and even repelling the exertions and ridiculing the anxieties of the friends who are endeavoring to save him. What madness! you exclaim. Yes; but far more dreadful is his madness who is thoughtless and at ease, while liable, every hour, to plunge, body and soul, into the fire that shall never be quenched. See that ship tossing in the storm. The wind howls and the sea boils around her. Her strained masts "quiver as a reed," her sails are torn and shivered, and with the abandonment of a doomed spirit, she drives upon the foaming breakers. But hark! from her deck there comes a sound of revelry. Her intoxicated crew are carousing in the very jaws of destruction. And yet, infatuated as their conduct is, it is immeasurably more rational than that of the sinner who sports and trifles in a situation so solemnly critical, that, perhaps, the next instant may wreck his immortal hopes on the rock of ruin.

VII. *The last mark of insanity, which I shall mention, is self-murder.*—The instances are not rare, in which men, in a paroxysm of delirium, have violently terminated their own lives. Equally desperate is the course which the wicked pursue. They, too, destroy themselves, and become the voluntary and efficient instruments of their own damnation. They might be saved if they would, even though the sentence of their condemnation is already passed, and the warrant for its execution written and sealed. For Christ has died to procure their pardon, and nothing but their own refusal can defeat his gracious mediation. But they will not be pardoned. They choose death rather than life, and, with suicidal hand, thrust from them the charter of forgiveness. So strongly, indeed, are they bent upon ruin, that, in effecting it, they surmount innumerable obstacles, and overcome the most powerful resistance. They employ every artifice to avoid conviction, to stifle serious feeling, and to counteract the agencies exerted for their conversion. They spurn the counsels of age, and the dictates of experience; scoff at the admonitions of the Bible, the lessons of the sanctuary, and the entreaties of pious friendship; press onward in their career against all the barriers of a Saviour's love, and all the strivings of his Spirit; and rending away every cord which God has, in mercy, thrown around his wandering creatures, to draw them back to himself—leap wilfully into the open pit. Their destruction, is, therefore, wholly self-induced. They perish as wantonly as the man who plunges a knife into his bosom. They are as really the authors of their own doom, as if the soul within them were a pearl, and they should cast it into mid-ocean; or as if it were a combustible world, and they with a torch should set it on fire. And when we see all this—when in the light of inspired truth we behold the earth thus filled with moral suicides, who despise the patience, and tantalize the compassion, and dare the vengeance of the Eternal—we cannot, without the utmost violence to reason, avoid the conclusion, that impenitent sinners are spiritually mad.

Having thus enumerated some of the principal tokens of insan-

ity, and shown that they all exist, with mournful prominence, in the character of irreligious men, the subject will now be closed with *three* brief reflections.

1. *How great is the depravity of the human heart.* On every side we see immortal beings reasoning and acting like the merest idiots, disbelieving the clearest truths, heedless of their highest good, unappalled by the most awful and threatening evils. If, however, this conduct were the result of any derangement of their natural powers, sad and disastrous as it is, it would not be criminal. But the distemper which produces these effects, is seated, not in the intellect, but in the affections, and springs, not from necessity, but from choice. That this is true, is evident from the fact, that they manifest no want of sagacity in relation to objects with which their inclinations accord. It is with reference to religion alone that all their wisdom is seen to forsake them. Their imbecility upon this subject, therefore, emanates entirely from the voluntary sinfulness of their hearts. It is this which has darkened their understandings, distorted their perceptions, robbed them of their celestial birthright, and rendered them the abject slaves of unhallowed passions. It is this, in short, which has transformed a world, originally the scene of order and beauty, into a moral bedlam, dug deep the pit of hell, and peopled it with millions of undone immortals. Well, then, may inspiration declare, as it does, that "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart."

2. *The final condition of those who die impenitent, will be unutterably dreadful.* So great, even in this world, is the power of sin, that it has converted the earth into an arena of violence, where hatred and revenge, oppression and cruelty make happiness an alien; where justice bleeds at every pore, and virtue weeps over her fallen altars. Yet here numerous causes conspire to soften its virulence, and obstruct its operation. The social affections, which still bloom in the waste of our degenerate nature, like lonely flowers upon a mouldering ruin—the force of public opinion—the intercourse and example of the pious—and, above all, the counteracting principles of the gospel—continually exert upon it a repressing and modifying influence. But in the abodes of endless punishment all these restraints will be removed. There the corruption of ungodly men will have free scope; and their passions, which are now comparatively in their infancy, will start up into giant strength, and rage uncontrolled. How terrible, then, must be their state, when they shall be thus abandoned to the unbridled workings of their own depravity! Suppose a company of maniacs, separated from all communion with the sane and rational, confined together in a gloomy cell, and left to the raving impulses of delirium,—and you have but a feeble emblem of the bitter execrations, the wild uproar, the raging madness, which will fill the prison of despair, when the wicked, of all ages, and from all quarters of the world, shall be shut up in its bottomless dungeons; and when—shorn of every amiable

quality that adorned them here, exiled from hope, pursued by the furies of remorse, and tortured into phrensy by the view of the far off heaven which they have lost forever—they shall curse themselves and each other, and lift up their eyes, and blaspheme their Maker because of their plagues! From a spectacle so replete with horror, who of us must not turn shuddering away, and fervently implore Almighty God to prevent us, by his grace, from realizing it in our own experience?

3. *How unspeakably precious, viewed in the light of this subject, does the Saviour appear.* He alone can heal the insanity of sin, and quench the incipient hell which it has kindled within us. And this he is not only able but willing to do for all who truly apply to him. It is his own declaration, "O, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help." It is his own invitation, "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved." It is his own promise, "He that believeth in me shall never perish." As he calmed, with a word, the fury of the demoniac among the tombs, and placed him at his feet, "clothed, and in his right mind;" so he removes the moral madness of those who seek him by faith, washes them in his blood, and prepares them, by his Spirit, for heaven. To him, therefore, I would most earnestly invite you. Repair, without delay, to the fountain which he has opened, and bathe your distempered hearts in its waters. Hasten, this very hour, to the great Physician, lest, while you linger, the malady now preying upon your souls, reach that incurable malignity, which is the sure precurser of the second death. Will you, can you, feel secure in a situation so perilous? Can you sit still, and hope that all will be well, and cry, "Yet a little more sleep, a little more slumber," while the leprosy of sin is raging through all your faculties, and the angel of mercy—long grieved and resisted—stands ready to take his returnless flight, and leave you to incorrigible impenitence? Shall God command and entreat you in vain? Shall the Redeemer stoop from heaven, and die for your salvation—and yet will you spurn his grace, and trample on his bleeding love? O, be persuaded to renounce, at once, this desperate and unnatural conduct. Seek the Lord while he may be found—call upon him while he is near. Listen to the voice of infinite compassion, cast yourselves, in penitent submission, at the feet of the omnipotent Saviour—and he will renew your polluted natures, forgive your aggravated offences, and deliver you from the utter ruin, in which your present course must inevitably terminate.

Followers of the crucified Jesus! Professed disciples of him who poured out his blood to cure the madness of rebellious men! Is it from such a doom as we have described that his grace has rescued you? What gratitude, then, to the Author of your redemption should you feel and exhibit! What intense devotedness—what holy spirituality—what estrangement from the world and its follies—should pervade and influence all your actions! How should your views, your affections, your purposes, and

your whole lives, prove, that you are illumined by celestial light, and guided by heavenly wisdom. What deep and active solicitude, too, should you cherish for the conversion of the impenitent around you. The sight of a world "lying in wickedness," and rushing to perdition, led the Son of God to exchange a throne for a cross, and drew tears from his eyes, and blood from his heart. And if you have aught of his Spirit, you will follow with your efforts and prayers the perishing multitudes of your fellow men, till they either find refuge in Christ, or sink, beyond reach of hope, into an undone eternity.

SERMON CCCXIV.

BY REV. EDWIN HALL,

OF NORWALK, CONN.

THE MANNER OF WORSHIPPING GOD.

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."
—Ecclesiastes v. 1, 2,

These words concern the *manner of worshipping God.* I shall,

I. Mention some reasons why we should be exceedingly cautious and watchful over ourselves while engaged in the worship of God: and

II. Make some remarks relating to the manner of worship,

I. *Reasons &c.* When the Lord descended upon Sinai, and the whole mountain was filled with a cloud and thunderings and lightning, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud—"the trump of God;" probably, that which shall waken the dead, and call the world to judgment; the people trembled and removed and stood afar off; and said to Moses, "Speak thou with us, but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

We come into the presence of the same God. We are not indeed come to the mount that burned with fire; we are come unto mount Sion. But the Lord God is still a jealous God; he hath not abated ought of his majesty or his holiness. "The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him." Were the angels to come into the sanctuary, their eyes would behold the King; they would veil their faces and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." The Lord is here; hating irreverence and presumption as much as when he commanded Moses to go down to charge the people not to come near the mount, or break through to touch it, lest they die. Christ hath opened for us a new and living way within the veil, to the very mercy seat; but we should remember that it is the holy of holies still. The lord is still a holy and jealous God. He seeketh such to worship him as worship in spirit and truth. He

searches the heart; he trieth the reins, "The Lord is a great God, and a King above all gods." "The Lord your God, is God of gods, and Lord of lords; a great God, a mighty and terrible, which regardeth not persons nor taketh reward." "The great, the mighty God, the Lord of Host is his name." An earthly king will be served in state. Shall we come to worship, and to petition the living God in matters for which he is angry; for which he has sentenced the world to death; for which he will cause the very earth which has been defiled by our wickedness, to be burned up; shall we, worms of the dust, and ready to perish under his frown, comeinto his presence, and come thoughtless and irreverent, as though we believed the Lord no God, or as though we were approaching a dumb idol? Shall we come rudely before him, with vapid and empty words; indulge in slovenly attitudes, and remain in a slovenly frame of mind; while engaged in a work which would fill the highest angels with awe? "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." "God is greatly to be feared, in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh unto me," saith the Lord. How dangerous it was to Uzza to put forth an irreverent hand to the ark, otherwise than God had commanded. Remember how Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. "And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them; and they died before the Lord." The day of such miraculous interpositions is past; but these are left on record to teach the world forever, how solemn and reverent it becomes those to be, who appear before the Lord. It should be remembered, too, that we are not holy beings, who come, like the angels, to render homage to their Creator, who takes pleasure in them. Even they veil their faces when they come into his presence. But we are sinners, altogether unclean. It does not become us to be bold, and to offer the sacrifice of fools. It does not become us to be rash with our mouth, or to let our heart be hasty to utter any thing before God. We have another errand before his throne than that of the angels. We are to be reconciled to an offended God, and to be cleansed from our iniquities, or we are soon to perish from the way; then how solemn should *we* be, when we come into the presence of the Lord! Think not, when you come into the sanctuary with scarcely a thought of God; think not, while you take an apparent part in the worship of God, but with no design of worshipping in spirit and in truth; think not, while your thoughts are on your business, or meditating sin, or roving with the fool's eyes to the end of the earth, that the Lord is as indifferent and as thoughtless of your conduct as yourself. He searches your heart. He is proving you. Not the least part of your probation is going on; you think little of it; but not so the Lord. He regards that insensibility to truth and duty; he takes notice of that irreverence toward God; that want of fear;

that want of faith. He marks the insult. He marks the awful profaning of things sacred. You tread upon holy ground; you stand in an awful place. If you felt it aright, you would say with Jacob, "Behold, God is in this place, and I knew it not. How awful is this place; this is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." Whether you feel it or not, the Lord regards it. Scarcely can you have a more solemn account to render concerning any part of your life, than that which you must render concerning the manner in which you have attended on the worship of God.

II. *Particular remarks concerning the manner of Worship.*

1st. *We should make our attendance upon the house of God a matter of principle.* It would be a good thing to worship God, and to give thanks; and praise would be comely, were it not required. But God requires solemn and public worship of all men. He is jealous for his honor. He will be reverenced: he will be obeyed: and more than this he will be worshipped. Doubtless public worship is necessary for maintaining a suitable regard for God among men, and necessary also, for keeping alive among men upon the earth, a knowledge of the great truths of religion; and for impressing these truths upon their consciences and their hearts. It is beneficence in the great Creator, not less than jealousy for his own honour, that has required of all men solemn worship, and that they set apart one day in each seven as sacredly devoted to that worship of God, and to the care of their souls. People greatly err, when they think it is left at their option, whether to go up to the house of God and join in public worship or not. Many seem to consider it a matter left entirely to their caprice, *where* to attend; how often to attend; or whether they attend on public worship at all. It is true, that man may not dictate to their consciences in this matter; but God has required solemn and stated worship; and while God allows not one man to meddle with the conscience of another, he will vindicate his own right to be Lord of the conscience; and he will hold every man to answer concerning the matter of attendance upon public worship, at his bar of final judgment. It is not, therefore, a matter left to any man's caprice, whether he attend public worship *at all.* He sins if he neglects it; he wrongs his God; he wrongs his own soul. The eye of God is upon him as he contemns the sanctuary of the Lord. It is not left to his caprice, *how often* he attends; his attendance must be regular, or he sins and wrongs his God and his own soul. The providence of God that disenables him, excuses his attendance; but he has no right to disenable himself by previously exhausting his body or his mind. He is not at liberty to give way to an inconvenience, which would not hinder him from attending to his ordinary important business. If he indulges his slothfulness or his caprice, he sins. He contemns the authority of God, and contemns his institutions and his worship; besides fostering his own depravity, cutting himself off from the divine blessing, and

treasuring up for himself the divine vengeance. People who attend only once in a while, or only half a day, would do well to think of this. Is it piety, or is it wickedness, that gives rise to the practice? Is it devotion, or is it caprice and contempt of God.

It is not left to a man's caprice *where* he shall attend. Many roam about from one place to another, consulting now their fancy, now their caprice; now desiring to relieve the tedium of attending public worship by variety, and now changing the place of attendance, to avenge some petty personal grievance. This is all wrong. No man may judge for another where he shall attend, except where God has put children and minors in the charge of others.

But if no man may dictate to another, every man is bound to decide for himself, and on principle. He may not, without guilt and danger to his soul, consult his fancy or caprice. His inquiry should be: Where is God worshipped according to his word? Where is the gospel held and proclaimed in its purity? Where can I worship God according to his word and my own conscience; where will it be the pleasure of God, and to the profit of my soul, I give my attendance? There he should fix, there he should remain. No caprice, no trivial grievances, no inferior considerations, such as popularity, fashion, exemption from burdens, should ever be allowed to come into weigh upon the question. Where shall I worship God? Let God and conscience be consulted, and these alone. Let the question be settled on principle, and let principle keep it settled. A man is very likely to make shipwreck of his soul who begins by sacrificing principle here to his passion, to his pride, to his avarice, or to his whim.

The first point, then, concerning the manner of worshipping God is to make that worship a matter of principle. Indulge fancy, exercise caprice in other matters if you will; but let nothing less than your soundest judgment, and the most unwavering principle, have any thing to do in these great concern. with God. Here, if any where, a man should be thoughtful There, if any where, he should be sober minded and discreet. Here, if any where, he should act wisely and in the fear of God.

The 2nd remark which I have to make on the manner of worshipping God, is that we should *do it with preparation.* Time should be taken to compose the mind; to call in the thoughts; to reflect upon the engagement upon which you are to enter, so as to be suitably impressed with the awful solemnity of coming tion the immediate presence of God. If we go into the house of God reeking from the world, neither our hearts nor our thoughts will probably be withdrawn from the world while we should be engaged in worship. Let us say to ourselves, Now we are about to approach the King. Let the loins of our mind be girt up. Let all vain thoughts, and all vain cares be put away. Let us stir up [illegible] hearts, that we may render an acceptable offering to him [illegible]oks upon the heart, and seeketh such to worship him, as

worship in spirit and truth. Let us reflect how important is our errand to the mercy seat; of what import, grace, forgiveness and salvation are to us. Let us remember how often our vain hearts have left us to an unprofitable service in the sanctuary. Let us pray; let us read some portion of the word of God, and mediate in secret, till we are prepared to appear before God with solemnity and with holy fear. Why should we rush into the presence of God, as the horse rusheth into the battle? Do we so slightly regard the presence of the Lord? Is it so light a matter in our eyes, to appear before the King? Is our errand so light, that it should lie with no more weight upon our minds? Is this our dread of hypocrisy? Is this our fear of provoking the Lord to jealousy, and of hardening our own hearts, by attending listlessly upon the solemn worship of God? How solemn would our assemblies be, if every heart were collected and deeply fixed on God! How impressive would be our songs of praise! How powerful would be the word of God! How ready would the great God be to come down and bless a people whose hearts were all prepared to seek the Lord! This would indeed be to us the house of God, and the Gate of heaven! But what is the actual preparation with which we appear in this house? How many come with a set design to *worship* the Lord in the beauty of holiness. How many come with a holy jealousy over their own hearts? How many come—having *charged* their souls to be solemn and devout; and *anxious* less they displease the Lord, or fail to secure some blessing from their attendance on the sanctuary this day? How many come from their closets? How many have made a single petition this morning, for grace to worship God in the sanctuary acceptably, with reverence and Godly fear? If you go away with the full design accomplished which you had in your thoughts before you came to the house of God; if you go away with the full blessing which your soul desired, and for which you asked the Lord before you came; what will you carry away with you when you leave the house of God? Wonder not if your sabbaths are profitless, and if the gospel be hid from you as it is hid from lost souls, if your attendance in the house of God is so light a matter as to lie with no weight upon your mind, and to draw from you no preparation beforehand, to meet the Lord.

3dly. We come now to the *manner* of worship. Are we ever engaged in a work so solemn and awful as when we are attending to the worship of God in his holy house? How careful should we be to "keep our foot!" How jealous over our hearts! How careful to make it *worship* which can be accepted of him who searches the heart! What an alteration would it make in our worship, if every psalm were sung with the spirit and with the understanding! But how often do those who sing, feel more concerned to perform well to the ears of man, than to appear sincere and devout in the sight of God? How large a portion of *those whose voices* do not join the song, do not join it with their

hearts! They are thinking how they are entertained with the performance; they are listless, perhaps gazing about with their thoughts on other things. As the Lord looks down from heaven, how many hearts does he behold devoutly lifted up to him, with feelings corresponding with the sentiments of the song? This ought not so to be. God is mocked, not worshiped, by such service as this. In our prayers we abound in confessions of sin; but the Lord sees how many hearts are making confession with due contrition. We praise and honor our Creator and our God: but the Lord knows how many hearts are lifted up in these praises The Lord knows how many keep their thoughts and lift up their hearts in the petitions which are repeated in the form of prayer. Let any one watch himself, and see how large a portion of the public prayer he follows, and makes his own. Let him reflect how his thoughts have been customarily engaged; or how much of the time they have been vacant; and he is a happy man, who shall not be compelled to feel, to his grief and shame, that no small portion of his share in public worship, has been irreverence, mockery and lies. "This people draweth nigh to me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Alas that this reproach did not belong so universally to our fallen race. There is great danger that the preaching and hearing of the word be entirely perverted from the great end for which it was ordained. Wo to us if we make it a matter of entertainment; to be performed and to be received as an intellectaul display. How careful should we be to see to it that the preaching of the world is, to set forth the sincere milk of the word, the pure and the simple explaining and applying of the Lord's truth, for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that God may be reverenced and souls saved! How careful should preacher and hearer be to profit by that word! It might then make us wise unto salvation.

We ought to refleet, that a slovenly or listless manner of attending divine worship, is highly provoking to God. It sears our own consciences, it hardens our hearts. We are far gone in the road to ruin when we can handle sacred things so profanely. The displeasure of God adds to the misery of a hardened heart and a seared conscience. Possibly if we knew the truth, we might find that this mockery of God under the form of worship is not a small one among the reasons why the Spirit of God has been so much withdrawn from us. "For the cause;" said an apostle, concerning an irreverent manner of celebrating a divine ordinance, "for the cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Can it be a matter of wonder if many, by gradually declining into a careless manner of worshiping God, should become weak and sickly as Christians, and sleep as though they were in the slumbers of death? Read the 1st chapter of Isaiah, to see how the Lord regards a sinful people who mock him with hypocritical worship. "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination *to me*; the new moons, and sabbaths, the call-

ing of assemblies. I cannot away with ; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." There are many things esteemed little things, which nevertheless are an index to the state of the heart. A late attendance, when it is caused by our negligence, and not by the providence of God ; an irreverent posture in prayer ; a lightness of demeanor ; allowing one's self to spend a part of the brief time allotted to the worship of God, in the indulgence of sleep ; these things may all be important, as indicating no great reverence for God, no great delight in worship, and a general indfference to the awful truths of religion. These things go far to show that the soul is without faith, and without the fear of God.

I feel it to be a matter of congratulation that, in this house of God, public worship is so seldom profaned by the light conduct of our youth. And yet I would that some of the children, were not sometimes so thoughtless and irreverent as to indulge in whisperings, which ought never to be heard during the worship of God. Once for all let the children remember it ; this ought never to be in the house of God. Let every thing here be solemn. Let no other engagement or thought intrude while we are in the presence of the Lord as worshippers.

Finally. As it will not do for us to neglect the worship of God, and as all hypocrisy is abomination in his sight, it will be well for us to inquire how we can properly worship God without true religion. You praise God ; you make confession of sin ; you pray for pardon and grace ; but what does it all mean while the heart is in rebellion, impenitent, disobedient, and unbelieving ? "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth ? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." Oh ! how dreadful to praise God, and make supplication before him, and then go away and reject his whole authority, and his salvation ! "These things hast thou done and I kept silence ; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself ; but I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes."

There is to be hereafter a general assembly of all holy beings : the general assembly of the church of the first born in heaven. They will worship and praise God, forever and ever. God shall dwell with them and be their God. The Lamb shall feed them and lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. We may each of us judge from the interest which we take in the worship of God here, whether we are likely ever to be admitted to that blessed assembly of worshippers in the kingdom of God.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

ORIGINAL—MONTHLY.

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

EDITED BY REV. W. H. BIDWELL.

VOL. XVI.

NEW YORK:

PUBLISHED—No. 128 NASSAU STREET.

1842.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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1903

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—— R. Craighead, Printer, 112 Fulton-st. ——

THE NATIONAL PREACHER.

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THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

NO. 1. VOL. XVI. JANUARY, 1842. WHOLE NO. 181.

SERMON CCCXV.

BY REV. JOEL HAWES, D.D.,

HARTFORD, CONN.

HEARERS OF THE GOSPEL IN A SOLEMN SITUATION.

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."—JOHN xv. 22.

WHEN the venerable Simeon clasped the infant Savior in his arms, he said to Mary, his mother,—"Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against." In prophetic vision, he looked through the long vista of distant years, saw that to multitudes, in every age, Christ would be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; that the preaching of his gospel would try the hearts and form the characters of men, and whilst it would be to some the means of raising them to mansions in the skies, it would be to others the means of sinking them low in the world of despair.

The Jews, to whom the words of the text were first addressed, were a people highly favored of God. Blessings innumerable had been lavished upon them. To them were committed the oracles of God. To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. A long succession of prophets had been raised up to declare to them the messages of heaven, and point them in the way of obedience and eternal life. Jehovah, himself dwelt in the midst of them, as their glory and defence, and shed over their Goshen a heavenly light; whilst all the world around was sunk in the deepest darkness of heathenism. These high and distinguished advantages they had often and greatly abused, and by their abuse of them had incurred great guilt. Yet our Savior declares in the text, that they had not had sin; that is, their sin

had been small, comparatively nothing, if he had not come and spoken to them. Their former privileges, great as they were, dwindled into nothing in comparison with those which they enjoyed in the miracles, the instructions, and perfect example of the great Teacher. Their former light was darkness compared with the light that shone upon them from the Sun of Righteousness, and consequently their sin, in the abuse of former mercies, was nothing in comparison with that of which they were guilty in making light of Christ and rejecting the claims of his gospel. This was a sin of such deep and peculiar enormity, that Christ, overlooking, as it were, their former sins, fixes upon *this* as the only one which they had ever committed. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." They had heard Christ preach the gospel, but did not embrace it; and this greatly enhanced their guilt, and rendered their condition far more alarming than it would otherwise have been. And this is true of all who hear the gospel without cordially embracing it.

The sentiment, then, suggested by the text, and which I desire at this time to impress upon your minds, is this:

When sinners hear the gospel they are in a solemn and critical situation.

We might give an impressive illustration of this subject by considering the nature of the truths which the gospel contains. They are truths which respect the Almighty God, and the eternal destinies of men. They cannot be rightly contemplated, even by beings not immediately concerned in them, without feelings of the deepest and most solemn interest. Were we mere spectators of the scenes which the gospel unfolds, it would indicate a very bad state of mind, not to be impressed and moved by them.

But we are *not* mere spectators; we are *actors*, and most deeply interested in the great things revealed in the gospel. The eternal destiny of our souls is at stake. The gospel does not allow us to contemplate its truths without being affected by them. It comes to us from heaven. It comes clothed with heaven's power, to form us vessels of *mercy*, fitted unto glory; or vessels of *wrath*, fitted unto destruction. It does not make known to us the character of a God with whom we have nothing to do; it brings us into the presence of that infinite Being whose government is universal; whose eye is over us in all our ways, and who will treat us in another world according to the character we sustain in this. It does not hold up to our view the spectacle of a lost world as a mere matter of curiosity; it assures us that we belong to the number of the *lost*, and with them are going to the bar of final judgment. It does not reveal a Savior, on whose person and character we may coldly speculate; it suspends our immortal happiness on a cordial *reception* of that Savior. It does not simply remove the curtain from the eternal world, and disclose to our view a heaven and a hell, as places of mere fiction; it assures us that we are

going to the eternal world,—that in heaven or in hell we are to dwell forever, according as we receive or reject its messages of grace. This renders the hearing of the gospel a very serious business. This throws a grandeur and an awe around the services of the sanctuary, that may well bid us beware with what feelings we enter this holy place, and engage in its ministrations. Consequences of everlasting moment are pending; the work of judgment and of mercy is going on, the effects of which will be as lasting as our being and as solemn as eternity. And it is from a consideration of *these effects* that I wish to show that *hearing the gospel* places sinners in a solemn and critical situation. For,

I. In the first place, it lays them under immediate obligation to embrace it. The gospel is worthy of all acceptation. It is a system of truth which needs only to be understood in order to commend itself to every enlightened conscience. Even those who have been most unwilling to submit to its authority, have been obliged to acknowledge its excellence. The most severe and sceptical examination of it has never been able to detect anything wrong in its doctrines or unreasonable in its precepts.

Now, assuming the fact that men are free moral agents, we say that as soon as they *hear* and *understand* the gospel, they are under obligation to embrace it. A bare knowledge of duty always binds the conscience to a performance of it. So the common sense of men decides. The parent considers his child bound to obey his commands as soon as he understands them. The magistrate regards the laws as binding on the subject as soon as they are published. And God always considers men as under obligation to obey *his* will as soon as it is made known. No allowance is made for indisposition. Whether they have a heart to obey or not, they are under eternal obligation to do what they know is right; and all *do* know, who have the bible in their hands, that it is right for sinful men to repent and obey the gospel. This is the command of God; this is the dictate of conscience, and no excuse for delaying obedience can be justified either at the bar of God or of conscience.

I am aware that the want of a disposition, or a right heart, is often urged as an excuse for not obeying the divine commands. But does the parent regard this as absolving his child from obligation to obedience? or the magistrate the subject? Admit that unwillingness, or the want of a right temper of mind, frees men from their obligations to obey, and you put an end to all government, and to all restraint. The sensualist could plead it, and indulge without remorse or fear of punishment, the vilest passions. The thief and the assassin could plead it, and range unrestrained through your streets in quest of plunder and of blood. The fact is, obligation to obedience depends on a knowledge of duty, and *not* in the least on a disposition to perform it. Accordingly, the apostle declares, that to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. To know our duty is to be under obliga-

tion to do it. There is not in the wide universe an exception to this rule. The moment the Lord Jesus speaks, there is no longer any cloak for sin. The moment the commands of God are known, they are binding. Publish the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself;" and it instantly becomes obligatory on every one that hears it. Publish the command, "Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" and every sinner is laid under obligation to repent and accept the Savior. Propose the terms of mercy revealed in the gospel, and all are bound by obligations from which they can never escape, immediately to embrace them.

2. Hearing the gospel places sinners in a solemn and critical situation, because it renders it necessary for them either to *receive* or to *reject* it. When the child knows the will of its parent, he must obey or disobey. And when sinners know what God requires of them, they must be either willing or unwilling to yield obedience. There is no middle course. The commands of their Sovereign are made known; they understand them, and now the only alternative is, either to obey or disobey. There is no possibility of assuming neutral ground. They are forced to a stand, and must either submit to, or rebel against the acknowledged authority of God, their Savior. And certainly, than such a situation none more solemn can be conceived, this side the eternal world. He is an immortal being, a lost sinner, to whom proposals of mercy are made, and the question to be decided is, shall he accede to them and live, or reject them and die; one or the other he must do.

The attitude of indifference or neutrality he cannot take. The command is positive:—Repent, believe, take up the cross, follow Christ. These duties, binding as they are on every living man, as soon as he understands them, demand *feeling, action, effort.* Indifference, then, is disobedience; neglect is transgression. To stand still when the command bids you go forward; to do nothing when God calls you to action, is as truly resistance to his authority, and as distinctly marks you a despiser of his grace, as open defiance or positive rebellion. Here is no room for exemption, none for neutrality. For or against the Savior, the friends or the enemies of Christ, we must be; and whether we will be the one or the other is necessarily decided by us, whenever the proposals of the gospel are proclaimed in our hearing.

3. Hearing the gospel places sinners in a solemn and critical situation, because it is to all who hear it, a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. It always hardens or softens the heart; prepares for heaven, or fits for hell. It is impossible to hear the great truths of the gospel without being essentially affected by them—without receiving impressions that will last forever.

It is a common and just remark, that we are the creatures of habit. We are the pupils of every object around us. The works of creation, the events of providence, our fellow men, our com-

mon enjoyments and daily occupations; and above all, the great truths of the bible, are constantly operating to form our characters, and prepare us for our future and everlasting state. Whether these things shall prepare us for happiness or misery—shall save or destroy us, depends upon the state of our hearts, or upon the use we make of them. The gospel, with its system of instruction and warning, of invitation and mercy, is certainly fitted and designed to save us from our sins, and fashion us for the service and enjoyment of God. And it actually produces this effect on the minds of all who open their hearts to its holy influences, and yield themselves to its transforming power. For we all, says the apostle, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image. But, upon the minds of the carnal and sensual, of the sinful and stupid, of the depraved and the worldly, it produces entirely opposite effects. Instead of melting, it hardens; instead of preparing them for glory, it fits them for destruction. Accustomed to hear, without feeling the truths of the gospel, they form a habit of insensibility and carelessness. Their hearts become hard and unimpressible. Eternal things lose their power to awaken or move them. They have so long heard the accents of mercy and the threatenings of justice, that both are alike indifferent to them. They can neither be won by love, nor alarmed by terror. Year after year they have sat under the light of the gospel, and have had disclosed to them the rewards and the punishments, the joys and the sorrows of an eternity at hand; but the only effect has been to increase their blindness, and make them more heedless of God and careless of their own souls.

Of this fatal apathy and hardness of heart, how many affecting examples do we find in the history of our ruined race? For illustration, I might point you to Chorazin and Bethsaida, to Capernaum and Jerusalem, places exalted to heaven by their privileges; but fitted for, and thrust down to hell, for their abuse of them. I might point you to multitudes in Christian lands, who have, evidently, by a long continued resistance to light and motive, passed themselves into that region of hardness and guilt where the Holy Spirit never interposes to bring to repentance, or fit for heaven. But I come nearer home, and appeal to your own experience. Do not some, who occupy these seats, know full well that the longer they hear the gospel without embracing it, the less they are affected by its truths? Can you not remember the time when eternal things more deeply impressed your minds than they do at present? As Sabbaths, and sacraments, and sermons, and prayers, and exhortations, and warnings, have been multiplying around you, have you not been traveling away from God and holiness; and is there not painful evidence, in respect to some of you, that you are to-day farther from repentance and heaven than ever before?

In this connection, it is important to observe, that in righteous judgment, God often abandons to hardness of heart and blindness

of mind, those who abuse the riches of his forbearance and long suffering. Go, says he to his prophet, giving him a commission against his ancient people; go, make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they hear with their ears, and see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed. In executing this mournful commission, the prophet did nothing but preach. But the truth falling upon depraved hearts, had the dreadful effect of stupefying and destroying them. This fearful power of divine truth to harden, to seal over to judgment, to hasten and bring it down, is often mentioned in scripture, as if on purpose to warn careless men against trifling with the messages that are sent to them. See, declares God to the prophet, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build up, and to plant. A dreadful instrumentality is here; but it is all embodied in that truth of God which is as the fire and the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. I have hewed them by the prophets, says God, I have slain them by the words of my mouth. In the same strain of solemn warning, the apostle declares that God will send strong delusion upon those men who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness; and the effect will be that they shall believe a lie, and be damned. Ah, my friends, it is a serious business to sit under the preaching of the gospel. Its truths are clothed with mighty power. They heal or they kill all to whom they are sent.

4. One thought more, I must add in illustration of our doctrine. An aggravated condemnation awaits all those who hear without embracing the gospel. He who now governs in mercy has appointed a day when he will judge men in justice. The Savior, whose gospel is now proclaimed in all the fulness of eternal love to a dying world, will one day exchange his throne of grace for a throne of judgment, and before him will be gathered all the tribes of men. Their deeds and their deserts will then pass in solemn review, and life or death eternal to every soul of man, will hang on the awful scrutiny. And of all the multitudes who shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, none will be burdened with deeper guilt, or fall under a more fearful condemnation, than those who have lived under the light, and abused the grace of the gospel. They will be in the condition of that servant who knew his master's will, but prepared not himself to do it, and was therefore worthy to be beaten with many stripes. They will be found to have resisted great light and abused great mercies; and to have passed on to perdition over the ten thousand obstacles which the goodness and forbearance of God have thrown in their way. They were warned, they were invited, they were commanded, they were threatened, but all in vain. The only effect was to stupefy and harden. They were fitted for destruction by the abundance of divine goodness—prepared for ruin by the mercies

of God; and when they shall appear at the judgment, a holy universe will approve the sentence that shall cause them to sink far below Chorazin and Bethsaida, Tyre and Sidon, in the world of everlasting punishment.

In reflecting upon the preceding discourse, we cannot forbear to notice, 1. How full of meaning is that question of the apostle—"Who is sufficient for these things?" He had been speaking of the opposite effects produced by the preaching of the gospel. "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one, we are a savor of life unto life; and to the other, a savor of death unto death; and who is sufficient for these things?" The apostle's eye was open full on the momentous results of his ministry. He looked beyond the transient scenes of time to the eternal consequences pending on his labors; and he felt that it is indeed a most serious business to be employed in fitting men for their future and everlasting state. And it is this view of the sacred office which must always most deeply affect every faithful minister of Christ. His aim is the salvation of his hearers. His heart is fixed on presenting every one of them perfect in Christ Jesus, on the great day of his coming. For this he studies and preaches; for this he labors and prays. But in respect to many of his hearers, he labors in vain, and spends his strength for nought. After having made his best preparations—after having selected, with anxious thought and prayerful attention, truths which he judges best adapted to awaken the conscience and draw the sinner from his dangerous ways, he comes before his hearers to deliver his message, under the painful, heart sinking impression that to some of them it will be a savor of death unto death; the means of throwing them into a deeper sleep, and of fitting them for an aggravated condemnation. Here is work that might well make an angel tremble. It is for eternity. The effects of every faithful christian sermon will be felt forever. This makes preaching a serious business. This spreads an air of sacred awe around the pulpit, and inscribes on the doors and walls of the sanctuary—"How dreadful is this place!"

2. It is an obvious inference from the preceding discourse, that sinners have no excuse for not embracing the gospel. There are, indeed, many excuses which they are wont to urge for neglecting this duty. They plead their farms and their merchandise, their worldly engagements and worldly connections. They even resort to the bible, and attempt to draw something from that to justify their disobedience to its plain and positive commands. They plead the purposes of God, the depravity of the heart, the nature of regeneration, the power of temptation, and their inability to do what God requires of them,—to palliate or excuse their impenitence and unbelief.

Not to say that those who urge these doctrines in excuse for sin, are generally inconsistent with themselves,—alleging the divine purposes as an excuse for not obeying the gospel, when they do

not believe in the divine purposes; pleading their inability, and yet displeased when told of their inability; seeking an apology for transgression in that very depravity which they deny to exist: not to insist upon this strange contradiction of ideas,—this palpable inconsistency between their sentiments and their conduct; it appears from this discourse that these and all other excuses which they can offer for neglecting their duty are entirely groundless. For if they could offer any good excuse for not obeying the gospel, their hearing the gospel could lay them under no obligation to embrace it. A man can never be under obligation to do what he has a good excuse for not doing. This is a self evident truth, and of universal application. Every one, therefore, who acknowledges that sinners ought to love God, that they are bound to repent, believe in Christ, and obey the gospel, must acknowledge that they have no excuse for neglecting these duties. Obligation excludes excuse. Where the one begins the other ends. They can never exist together. Now has it not been shown that hearing the gospel does oblige sinners to embrace it? that a bare knowledge of duty always imposes an obligation to perform it? Is not this a dictate of conscience? Is it not agreeable to reason and the common sense of mankind? And more than all, is it not declared and sustained by the testimony of God himself? Away, then, with excuses. The commands of God exclude them; conscience condemns them; they are the suggestion of a wicked heart; they ruin the soul. Obligation is fixed on all who hear and understand the gospel, immediately to yield to it a cordial obedience; and for delay of such obedience no living man has the least valid excuse. So it will appear on the day of final account. Every mouth will then be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God. For the coming of that day let one and all be prepared; and the only preparation, dear hearer, which will then avail you, is a hearty renunciation of all excuses for impenitence, and an humble acceptance of the mercy offered you in the gospel.

3. If hearing the gospel renders it necessary for sinners either to receive or reject it, then it is vain for them to suppose that they can take neutral ground. There are thousands who mean to take such ground. They regard religion as, on the whole, a good thing; and are willing that others should attend to it; but *they* do not intend to pay much attention to it themselves. Open opposition to the gospel they consider as very criminal, and they mean themselves to treat it with respect. But they do not mean to embrace it by a true and living faith, and yield to it the obedience of a devoted christian life. They think themselves safe if they do not oppose the gospel; and this they mean to avoid. Hence they attend public worship, hear respectfully the preaching of the word, often commend a plain and faithful exhibition of the gospel; but here they stop. They do not mean to be devoted christians; nor do they mean to be sinners, but to take neutral ground, and be neither for nor against Christ; neither gathering

with him, nor scattering abroad. But there is no such ground; *no*, my friends, *not in the universe.* The moment you know what God is, you must love or hate. The moment you hear the command, Repent, believe, you must obey or disobey. The precepts of the gospel coming home to the understanding, *fix* obligation, and constrain every living man to take sides; to rank himself either with the friends or with the enemies of God. Accordingly, the scriptures divide men into two classes; and from Genesis to Revelations, say not a word of a *third* class. They are saints or sinners, friends or enemies, travelers in the broad way or in the narrow way, heirs of life or children of perdition. This distinction now divides this audience, and marks every person present either for or against Christ. If the judgment were *now* set, and the books opened, all who are here in these seats would move off either to the right hand or to the left of the Judge; all would be approved as friends, or condemned as enemies. Not an individual would be exempted. And this distinction which now runs through and divides this assembly and all mankind into two classes, will be growing wider and wider to all eternity. It will be recognized at the judgment day, and form the ground of the eternal separation that will then be made between the righteous and the wicked, and it will then run on widening and widening during eternal ages. See to it, my friends, that you then be found not on the left hand of the Judge. Take now the stand of friendship to God. Be what duty demands, and what alone can save you from ruin—the open, decided followers of the Redeemer.

4. If hearing the gospel lays sinners under immediate obligation to embrace it, then it is unavailing for them to determine after having heard it, that they will hear it no more. It is not uncommon for them to make this determination. When they are told that the preaching of the gospel is to the wicked a savor of death unto death, and that attendance on the means of grace with wrong feelings will only fit them for destruction, they are often displeased, and resolve that they will hear the gospel no longer. But such a determination can avail them nothing; for their obligation is *fixed*, and fixed forever. Having learned what God is, and what he requires of them, they are laid under everlasting obligation to serve and obey him; an obligation that will lie upon them at all times and in all circumstances, and from which they can never escape. It will abide upon them through life, at death, and forever. What then, if, displeased with the truth of God, they retire from the house of God, and determine to close their ears against the sound of the gospel? What though they never open their bibles again, and never hear another sermon as long as they live? Their obligation remains the same. Having once known their Master's will, it is too late to think of freeing themselves from an obligation to do it. If, my friends, you could efface from your memories all recollection of the past; if you could forget there is a God, and annihilate all knowledge of duty; if you could reduce yourself to

idiocy, and stop the sounding of the fearful word, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned," then might you escape from the obligation that binds you to love and serve your great and glorious Creator. But till you can do this, never think that neglecting the means of grace, or turning away from the preaching of the gospel, will dissolve your obligation to God. Whether neglecting the means of grace, or attending upon them in a sinful, sluggish state of mind, is most offensive in the sight of God, I pretend not to say; but one thing I may say, doing either is inevitable ruin to the soul. And since either course ends in destruction, it is of little consequence to know which will carry you there soonest. God has not given us scales to weigh sin in. He forbids it in every shape, whether committed by attending on the means of grace with wrong feelings, or by an entire neglect of them. He requires the hearts of his creatures, and can accept of nothing short.

Choose the way, then, that eternal wisdom marks out; repent, believe, give your hearts to God, and reap the everlasting rewards of obedience. This is the only path to heaven; every other leads down to the regions of despair. Linger no longer on the field of death; trifle no longer with the calls of eternal love; dream no longer over the concerns of your salvation. Life is passing away; the precious hours of mercy are on the wing; to-day God waits to be gracious; to-morrow he may call you to your last account. Look then to his throne of grace; look, and your souls shall live.

But if you will yet delay; yet procrastinate the great work of preparation, and treat as a thing of nought the invitations and warnings of the gospel, then know for a certainty, that every day you live, you are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds.

SERMON CCCXVI.

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PREACHED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF PENNSYLVANIA, NOVEMBER 2ND, 1841, AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

A PRAYER FOR ZION.

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock: thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."—PSALM LXXX. 1, 2, 3.

THERE have been many conjectures respecting the author of this psalm, the time in which it was written, and the events to which it refers. On all these subjects the learned have differed among themselves. Without detaining you with their various opinions, the arguments adduced in support of each, and with what appears to our own view as most probable, it will be sufficient, for all purposes of useful instruction, to remark, that this psalm must have been written long after the establishment of the church in the land of Canaan, and at a period when it was suffering great adversity. Under the emblem of a vine, the church is represented as having taken deep root in that land, having extended its boughs to the sea, and its branches to the river; so that the hills were covered with the shadow of it, and its boughs were like the goodly cedars. But God, in judgment, had withdrawn his protection from his vineyard, and had broken down its hedges. Thus exposed, the enemy had invaded, and was laying waste this beautiful heritage. Fire was destroying its verdure, the boar from the wood was wasting, and the wild beast of the field was devouring it. Under these circumstances the pious psalmist repairs to the throne of God, and earnestly entreats him to look down from heaven, to behold and visit this vine, which he had himself planted, recover it from its desolations, and again, in mercy, extend to it his wonted regard and protection. Such is the general import of the prayer contained in the text. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock: thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin

and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

To a brief exposition of this passage, and the practical instruction it suggests, your attention is now invited. In our exposition we shall first advert to the titles and designations given to the object of prayer, and then to the petitions themselves.

I. The psalmist addresses the object of his supplications as the Shepherd of Israel. "O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." The pastoral life prevailed to a great extent in the earlier ages of the world, and particularly in the eastern countries. Flocks and herds constituted the principal wealth of the inhabitants, and to protect and feed them, were among the most honorable employments of life. The leisure and retirement it afforded, amid the luxuriant and beautiful scenes of nature by day, and the opportunity it furnished of contemplating the grandeur and magnificence of the nocturnal heavens, rendered it the chosen employment of the studious and meditative. The scenes and employments of pastoral life have furnished the sacred penmen with some of their most happy and striking illustrations. The Holy Spirit early chose this emblem to express the love, the watchfulness and the care, which the great Redeemer exercises towards his people, and which he will never intermit until he has brought them safe to heaven. The patriarch Jacob, at the close of his eventful life, in the prophetic blessing pronounced upon his offspring, alluded to the Author of their mercies, and the rock of their salvation, as the Shepherd of Israel. David recognizes him as such, and rejoices in the assurance of his provident and protecting care. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." The prophet Isaiah predicts the advent of the Messiah, as a tender and faithful servant, who should "gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom." In accordance with these ancient representations, our Lord, during his personal ministry, spoke of himself as "the Shepherd, the good Shepherd, who giveth his life for his sheep." We cannot then mistake the reference of this title, in this psalm. When the psalmist addresses his prayer to the Shepherd of Israel, he supplicates the interposition of Jehovah Jesus, the guide, the support, and the protector of his church in every age.

"Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock."—The whole community of Israel is sometimes denoted by the name of one tribe. Joseph was the beloved son of Jacob, and the father of Ephraim and Manasseh. His life had been the object of God's special care, and had called forth the most remarkable interpositions of his providence. The name Joseph, is associated with the most tender ex-

pressions of God's regard for his church; and the suppliant introduces this name in his prayer, probably to awaken, by recalling these associations, the sympathy of the Almighty Shepherd of Israel, for his wandering, yet deeply afflicted flock. The shepherd always preceded the sheep. They knew his voice; exercised unbounded confidence in his wisdom, power, and kindness. They felt themselves safe under his guidance and protection; and whereever he led they followed. Thus the Shepherd of Israel had led Joseph like a flock from Egyptian bondage, through the wilderness, to the promised land. He went before his people, directing their footsteps, subduing their enemies, and removing the obstacles out of their way, until they were put in possession of the promised land. Encouraged by these recorded instances of his faithfulness and mercy, the psalmist, now, when the desolations of Zion required his gracious interposition, reminds him of his acknowledged relationship, as the Shepherd of Israel, and earnestly supplicates his interference on her behalf.

"Thou that dwellest between the cherubims."—There is an allusion here to the mysterious manifestations of God's presence in the holy of holies, under the law. In that consecrated place the ark of the covenant was deposited. Its lid, or covering, was the mercy seat, surmounted by two cherubs, with their wings stretched out toward each other, forming a throne, as it were, upon which rested the mysterious symbol of the divine presence. It is in reference to this symbol that the psalmist addresses God, as he who dwells between the cherubims. The mercy seat was the type of the efficacy of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice for sin. In Heb. 9. 5, it is called "*hilasterion*," the propitiation; and of Christ it is said, Rom. 3. 25, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, (*hilasterion*,) through faith in his blood. He interposes between the throne of God, as the almighty guardian of righteousness, and his holy law; and by sustaining its honor and satisfying its claims, he averts its fearful curse from those who trust in his grace. It is to God as seated upon the throne of mercy, and having respect to the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, that the psalmist looks. It is his gracious interposition that he so earnestly seeks.

Let us turn our attention, for a moment, to the petitions addressed to this great and gracious God.

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel."—Zion was apparently forsaken, and her enemies triumphed. Her Redeemer seemed regardless of her desolations, and inattentive to the voice of her her prayer. She had deserved this rebuke, even though in anger he had shut up his tender mercies, and would be favorable no more. Yet her only hope was in that God against whom she had sinned. Should he cast her off, her desolations would indeed be perpetual, her ruin irremediable. Hence the pious suppliant betakes himself to God, and earnestly entreats him to "give ear"—to deign once more to listen to the voice of prayer in behalf of the

people whom he had chosen, redeemed, and called after his own name. He presses his suit, by referring to the gracious relationship to his people, as their Shepherd, which he had himself acknowledged, and to the recorded instances of his pastoral regard for them.

"Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth."—It was a day of clouds, and gloom, and storm, to the church. The tempest had swept over the heritage of God, and all was waste and desolate. This ruin must remain unimpaired, unless God, her Redeemer, who dwelt between the cherubims, would shine forth in the splendor of his power, truth, and love, hush this angry tempest, dissipate these gloomy clouds, and revive and bless his prostrate heritage. It is to God, as propitious to the sinful and guilty, through the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that the pious suppliant addresses his prayer, and connects in his petition, (doubtless as a reason why it should prevail), the manifestations of the divine glory with the object he so earnestly sought. "Shine forth"—let thy glory be manifested in the salvation of thy church.

"Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us."—The reason why these tribes are particularly designated in this connection, is not obvious. In the order prescribed for the march of the twelve tribes through the wilderness, these three followed immediately after the ark of the covenant, and the cherubims that overshadowed the mercy seat. Some have supposed that it is in reference to this fact, that these tribes are here designated. It is, however, the more probable supposition, that their names are used for the whole commonwealth of Israel, in whose presence the psalmist desires God to arise, and exercise his power for the salvation of his church. The suppliant feels that if Zion is ever recovered from her desolations, it is God that must effect it. No human power, no combination of created strength would avail; and, therefore, he earnestly entreats her Almighty Redeemer to arise, in the power of his might, in the presence of his church, and hasten to her deliverance.

"Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved."—They had departed from God, grievously departed from him; and though the obligation to return to him from whom they had revolted, was deeply felt, yet helpless in their guilt and ruin, they lay at the footstool of sovereign mercy, and on God alone was their dependence, even for that spirit of deep repentance, without which they could not hope for his blessing. Hence the suppliant beseeches God to turn them—to bring them, by his Spirit, with broken and contrite hearts, to himself and to the pathway of holy obedience to his will. "And cause thy face to shine upon us."—The face of God here denotes his favor,—his loving kindness; and the shining of that face, its gracious manifestations. This the suppliant sought in behalf of Zion. And when God should turn her from her iniquities, and should mani-

fest his loving kindness to her, then would she be recovered from her desolations, restored to her former beauty and glory, and rejoice in his salvation.

II. Having thus briefly unfolded the import of the passage, we proceed to consider some of the practical instructions suggested by it.

1. We learn from this portion of God's word, that the interests of Zion lie very near the hearts of God's people. The whole of this psalm, as well as the part under consideration, furnishes abundant evidence of this. Not a petition escapes the lips of the suppliant for himself, individually. All his thoughts and desires were absorbed in the afflictions and desolations of Zion. Over these he wept, while for her he poured forth his earnest prayer. Numerous instances of the same devotedness to Zion's welfare are recorded in the sacred scriptures. Moses, that honored servant of God, on more occasions than one, showed how intensely he felt for the welfare of the church, and of what little importance he esteemed everything else in comparison with her salvation, as connected with the glory of God. In one instance he implored God to blot his own name from his book, rather than withhold his blessing from his people. The aged Eli could hear, with comparative composure, of the defeat of the armies of Israel, and the death of his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, while his heart trembled for the ark of God, the symbol of his gracious presence among his people; and when he heard that that had fallen into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines, we are told that the shock to his pious mind was such as to overcome his strength, and he fell backward and gave up the ghost. Nehemiah, though the favorite of the Persian monarch, and surrounded by the luxury of an eastern court, when he heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and the gates thereof burnt with fire, and the remnant left of the captivity, in great affliction, sat down and wept and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the Lord of heaven. When inquired of by the king, why his countenance was sad, he replied: "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates are consumed by fire?" The pious captives, as they sat by the rivers of Babylon, their harps all unstrung and hung upon the willows, wept when they thought of Zion, and expressed their regard for Jerusalem in strains of most impassioned feeling:—"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." The prophet Jeremiah lived at a period when the church of God was suffering severe judgments, and threatened with others more so. The condition of Zion produced such constant sorrow in his mind, that he has been called the weeping prophet. And, yet, as though his

tears were insufficient to express his grief, we hear him exclaim: "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" It was this strong, abiding affection for the church of God, that led the apostles and primitive disciples of the Redeemer to such constant prayer, and such unceasing, laborious, and self-sacrificing efforts in her behalf. Every period of Zion's deliverance has been distinguished by those who have most deeply sympathized with her in her afflictions, who have felt the burden of her woes, and whose prayers have continued to ascend for her prosperity. This is the spirit of Christ himself, who loved his church, and gave himself for it, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savor; who rose from the dead, and lives and reigns to consummate the purposes of infinite goodness in relation to her.

Nor is it difficult to justify this strong affection, on the part of God's people, for his Zion. It is their distinguishing characteristic to love God supremely, and to delight in the manifestations of his excellence. In the exercise of those devout affections, which sprung up in their bosom in the contemplation of this excellence, their happiness is principally found. The manifestation of his own glory is the end of God in all he does. For this he laid the foundation of the earth, and stretched abroad the curtains of the heavens. For this he garnished the one with all its beauty, and arrayed the other in such magnificence and splendor. For this he walks forth in his providence, sometimes clothed in the dark majesty of his punitive justice, but more frequently enrobed in the glory of his beneficence, strewing around him, with lavish hand, the blessings of his goodness. In the displays of his glory he fills his holy universe with blessedness,—he sends the tide of rapturous joy through the bosoms of his holy, intelligent creation. The glory of God is the light and blessedness of heaven. To see it dimmed would shade the brow of the seraph with gloom, and cause his harp to fall tuneless from his hands. It is in consequence of her being so directly associated with the manifestations of God's glory, that Zion is invested with such deep interest in the mind, and has such a strong hold on the affections of every Christian. It is a vine which his own right hand has planted, that he may be glorified. When God was deprived, in consequence of the fall of man, of that glory which he designed to secure by the first creation, he introduced a new creation which should be forever to the praise of the glory of his grace. This new creation he is now carrying forward to its ultimate consummation. It is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, embracing the church of the living God, which he has purchased with his blood. Here the brightest manifestations of God's glory are made, the universe ever beheld. The developments and consummation of God's plan of mercy, through Jesus Christ, will fill his holy kingdom with the most perfect and enduring bliss. The Christian, then, who loves God supremely,

and finds his purest and highest enjoyment in the exercise of those holy and devout affections which spring from the contemplation of his glory, cannot be indifferent to the prosperity or adversity of Zion. When Zion prospers;—when rebellious men, the victims of depravity and guilt, bow, in sweet submission, to the sceptre of the Savior, and become his holy servants, and the heirs of eternal life;—when multitudes of joyful worshipers crowd the gates of Zion;—when her children, adorned with the beauties of holiness, and walking in the light of God's countenance, endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, then God is glorified, the hearts of his people are made glad, and all heaven rejoices.—But when Zion is led captive by her enemies; when the daughter of Jerusalem sits solitary on her ruined walls, and the songs of her children are heard no more; when divisions and contentions mar her beauty and weaken her influence, and the spirit of violence and discord rupture bonds that God holds sacred, then the hearts of those that love her are filled with sorrow, and surrounding the throne of grace, they implore the almighty and gracious interposition of her Redeemer. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock. Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine and we shall be saved."

The welfare of mankind, as well as the glory of God, is intimately associated with the prosperity of Zion; and for this reason the children of God feel a deep interest in her advancement. We are incapable of estimating how much human society is indebted to the indirect influence of the church of God, wherever it is established. The light which revelation has thrown upon the rights, the privileges, and the duties of men, as members of the same great family; the restraints which the institutions of religion have imposed on the depravity of the human heart, and the influence which they have exerted in promoting the intelligence of men, in cultivating their social affections, and in promoting the love of order and peace in society, are widely felt in advancing our social happiness. But the eternal salvation of men is of infinitely greater importance than their temporal well being. The ordinary means of that salvation are all with the church of God. Here are deposited the holy scriptures. Here is established the ministry of reconciliation, and here are appointed all those ordinances which God has proposed to make effectual to salvation. When Zion prospers—when God smiles upon her, and the blessing of heaven descends upon her institutions and ordinances, her influence on the surrounding community is most beneficial, while multitudes are born into the kingdom of God and rejoice in his salvation. In addition to this, there are other considerations which induce the Christian to regard the church of God with strong affection. Through her ministrations he has been brought himself to rejoice in God's salvation. In waiting on her ordinances, he has enjoyed

communion with his Redeemer, and the foretastes of his eternal rest. Here he has been associated with the friends of Christ, in advancing his kingdom; in the trials, and labors, and anxieties, as well as in the joys of the gospel. All his dearest interests are associated with the church of Christ. One thing does he desire of the Lord, and that will he seek after, that he may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. By means of the ordinances of his house, he hopes to be built up in knowledge and holiness, and prepared for the purer joys, and holier worship of the church above. We see then what ample cause the Christian has for his ardent attachment to the church of God, and his deep interest in her welfare. With the prosperity of that church, the glory of God, the welfare of man, and his own hopes and happiness are inseparably associated.

2. We further learn from this passage of scripture, that in the season of Zion's adversity the saint's resort is to God in prayer. As we have before remarked, no human power, no array of created strength, can recover Zion from her desolations, restore her to her wonted beauty and glory, and cause her influence to go forth for the salvation of the world. "Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains. Truly, in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." With this truth the people of God have been deeply impressed in every age of the world, and have gone directly to his throne, and implored his almighty and gracious interference. They have had every encouragement to do so. It is the revealed purpose of God that his church shall continue, prevail over all opposition, rise superior to all her enemies, and fill the world with her glory. The purposes of God respecting this lower world, and the events which are here to transpire, are all inseparably associated with the final triumph and advancement of his church. This is the consummation of his plan—the end of his providence. His people, therefore, seek but the accomplishment of the divine purpose, when in the season of Zion's adversity they resort to God in prayer, and implore his interposition on her behalf. They are further encouraged to do this by the fact that Jesus Christ is now in heaven, seated upon his mediatorial throne, exalted far above principalities and powers, dominions, and every name that is named; that he rules supreme over all, and is constituted head over all things to his church. His eye is ever watchful, and his arm never grows weary. That watchful eye and that almighty arm, are directed by a heart that glows with infinite, eternal love to his church. "I have loved thee,".(it is his own declaration,) "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." When the Saviour would express the strength of his attachment for his people, he searches in vain for a comparison among human or angelic affections. An adequate illustration

could only be found in the love which exists between the persons in the Godhead: As the Father hath loved me, EVEN so have I loved you. Such is the affection of Jesus for his church. This affection now reigns in his heart as he sits enthroned in glory. And ought it not to inspire us with confidence in addressing his throne on Zion's behalf? Hear how he himself chides the unbelief of his desponding people: "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold! I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. Thy walls are continually before me." There may be much to discourage in the condition of the church, and in the aspect of divine providence. A dark cloud may hang over Zion. The heritage of Zion may be desolate. Division and discord and violence may prevail. But Jesus lives. The great Redeemer reigns. His promise is pledged for the enlargement, and his power is able to redeem all that he has promised. With such encouragement, every Christian should, with meek and fervent prayer, implore the blessing of God on his church.

3. From the passage under consideration we learn, that the Christian does not hope for the blessing of God to descend upon his church, without deep repentance on the part of his children, and their return to the path of duty. God never withdraws his protection and blessing from his church, without some adequate reason. "Behold," says the prophet, addressing Zion, "Behold! the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you." Such has always been the case. The judgments which befall Zion may always be traced to her iniquities, as their cause. It would be presumption to expect that God would restore his favor while she remained impenitent. But how shall her repentance be secured? How shall her children be brought, humbled and broken-hearted, to the throne of God, imploring his forgiveness, and the return of his favor? There is no question about their obligation and their duty. But while these should be urged and pressed with importunity, we never should forget our dependence upon the spirit of God, to convince even the professed followers of Jesus Christ of their sin, and to bring them penitent to the foot of the cross. How often are Christians, and even ministers of the gospel, deceived, in regard to their own feelings and actions. How often, especially in times of excitement and contention, is a carnal policy, which God abhors, mistaken for Christian wisdom and prudence; unholy violence, and bitter denunciations, for zeal for God's truth and worship; and a disregard for the most sacred rights justified on the ground that the glory of God and the welfare of the church demanded it. And when the

excitement passes away, and judgment and conscience begin to react, how difficult for men then to yield to the conviction of their sin, and be willing to confess it before God, and seek his forgiveness. But it will not answer for Christians and ministers to cover over their sins, and then hope that God will forget them. An unwillingness to submit to the humiliating confession of some sin, has often closed the kingdom of heaven against the sinner, and withheld the blessing from the church of God. The church now needs that outpouring of the Holy Spirit which shall convince all her members of their sins, take from them the spirit of self-justification, break their hearts with ingenuous sorrow, and humble them in the dust before the throne of God. Then will he cause his face to shine, and they shall be saved. He will redeem his own promise: "I will heal their backslidings. I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from them. I will be as the dew unto Israel. He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." The church does not require the aid of wealth or worldly influence to achieve her benign and holy triumphs over the depravity and wretchedness of man. She is most powerful when, possessing the least of these, she enjoys most of the presence and blessing of her Divine Head; when her members are all united in the bonds of holy love; when they are all animated by the single desire to glorify God and advance his cause; when deeply conscious of her dependence on God, they humbly and unitedly seek him in prayer, but at the same time are actively engaged in doing what he requires; when the beauties of holiness adorn their lives, and the pure, humble, heavenly spirit of Christ breathes its sweetness into all their actions. Then the church "looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

Christian brethren, and members of the Synod of Pennsylvania: the subject that has claimed your attention has probably led your thoughts to the condition of that portion of the church of God with which we were formerly ecclesiastically associated as one body. Without indulging the spirit of boasting, we may safely assert, that the Presbyterian Church, in these United States, previous to the commencement of that policy and those measures which eventuated in her violent disruption, was among the most flourishing and honored churches of our land, or of the world. With an apostolic faith, government, and worship, she united intelligence, devoted piety, and energetic zeal. Deeply lodged in the affections of her children, and richly sharing in the ascension gifts of her exalted head, she was widely spread throughout our own country, and her influence was felt among the distant heathen. We may say of her, in the language of the psalmist: "God had prepared room before it, and caused it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadows of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her

boughs to the sea, and her branches to the river." But, alas! how changed! Her prasent condition, contrasted with what she once was, is calculated to fill the mind of every Christian with unmingled sorrow. It is not my intention to advert to the causes which led to these disastrous results, nor to dwell upon the sad picture, which this church now presents. Not that I think it unimportant to search out these causes, and hold up to the church at large, these results. The hurt of the daughter of Zion will not be healed by covering over the wound, and crying peace, peace, when God says there is no peace. But the occasion does not call for it, and time will not permit me to dwell upon this subject. Though I think that that portion of this ruptured church, with which we are connected, stands on the basis of our excellent constitution, and maintains, thus far, the usages and the policy of that church, in her best and brightest days; and, though we may feel conscious, that in the course we have pursued, we have neither violated the principles of eternal justice, nor willingly ruptured the bonds of Christian fellowship, still we are to be humbled before God, for those sins which have provoked him so far to forsake his heritage, as to leave it to become the spoil of the violent and contentious. But in addition to this, God, doubtless, has seen much iniquity in our own hearts, and in the hearts of those who act with us, on account of which he has been justly displeased. Every one should search his own heart, humble himself before God, and earnestly pray that he would look down from heaven and behold, and visit his vine, and the vineyard which his own right hand had planted, and the branch he had made strong for himself. Nothing can excuse us from feeling a deep interest in the spiritual prosperity of that portion of our church from which we are separated. We should watch with jealous care our own hearts, lest the spirit of unhallowed rivalry should obtain possession of them. There are multitudes among our brethren, both ministers and others, who do not approve of those violent measures which have torn the church asunder, who regard us with affectionate confidence, and who earnestly pray for our prosperity. They are not, and will not be influenced by that spirit, which would erect an impassable barrier between us, and banish us from their communion and fellowship. It is our duty to reciprocate their kind feelings, and earnestly desire and pray, that that portion of our once united and happy church, with which they and their families are connected, may retain nothing in its spirit or conduct which shall separate them from the blessing of God, and that they may richly share in the effusions of his Holy Spirit. We should lay aside the spirit of self justification, and be clothed with humility and charity and kindness. Let us see to it that our ways please God, and then he will make our enemies to be at peace with us. We are not, I conceive, to be over anxious about an ecclesiastical re-union. How long this separation, and all the evils growing out of it, are to continue, God only knows. But if both portions of the church are deeply

humbled before God on account of their sins; if both are deeply imbued with the spirit of pure religion; if on both God causes his face to shine, and pours out his Holy Spirit, there will be a union, far closer, far more useful, and more enduring than any produced by a mere ecclesiastical relation.

Brethren, in regard to ourselves, let us labor after the spirit of deep penitence and holy devotedness to God. Let ministers and elders and people here, on this solemn occasion, unite in humbling themselves before him, and in renewing the consecration of themselves to his blessed service. Let them surround the throne of grace and unitedly seek the blessing of God on their beloved Zion. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock: thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God! and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

A FRAGMENT

FROM II TIMOTHY 1. 10.

"THE men of this earth carry on their designs and their doings just as if on earth they were to live forever. It is not the greatness or the durability of the objects, which creates and keeps up so mighty a stir among our species; it is the folly of men that urges them to the pursuit of paltry and evanescent objects—a folly which overlooks the arithmetic of our little years, and has invested them with the characters of eternity—a folly which all the demonstrations of experience have been unable to rectify, and which, after the mighty sweep of countless generations from the face of our world, reigns with unquelled strength over the human heart, and finds the men of the present day as unwise and as infatuated as ever.

Death is a theme of mighty import, and every variety of eloquence has been exhausted on the magnitude of its desolations. There is not a place where human beings congregate together, that does not, in the fleeting history of its inmates, give the lesson of their mortality. Is it a house? Death enters unceremoniously there, and, with rude hand, tears asunder the dearest of our sympathies. Is it a town? Every year Death breaks up its families, and the society of our early days is fast melting away from us. Is it a church? The aspect of the congregation is changing perpetually; and in a little time another people will enter these walls, and another minister will speak to them.

Our fathers who strutted their little hour on this very theatre, were as active and noisy as we—the loud laugh of festivity was heard in their dwellings, and in the busy occupations of their callings—but where are they now? They are where we shall soon follow them; they have gone to sleep—but it is the sleep of death—their bed is a coffin, in which they are mouldering—the garment which they have thrown aside is their body, which served them through life, but is now lying in loose and scattered fragments in the little earth that they claim.

Death carries to our observation all the immutability of a general law. We cannot reverse the process of nature, nor bid her mighty elements to retire. But is there no higher authority—no power that can grapple with this mighty conqueror, and break his tyranny to pieces? We never saw that being, but the records of past ages inform us of the extraordinary visitor who lighted on these realms, where death had reigned so long in all the triumphs of extended empire. Wonderful enterprise! He came to destroy death! Vast undertaking!

At the coming of that mighty Saviour, these heavens broke silence—music was heard from their canopy, and it came from a congregation of living voices which sung the praises of God, and made them fall in articulate language on human ears.

The disciples gave up all for lost when they saw the champion of their hopes made the victim of the very mortality which he promised to destroy. He entered

> "That undiscovered country, from whose bourn
> No traveler e'er returns."

But *he* did. He broke asunder the mighty barriers of the grave; he entered, and he reanimated that body which expired on the cross, and by that most striking of all testimonies, he has given us to know that he hath fought against the law of death, and hath carried it. He has not *abolished* temporal death; it still reigns with unmitigated violence, and sweeps off each successive generation. Death still lays us in the grave, but it cannot chain us there to everlasting forgetfulness: it puts its cold hand on every one of us; but a power higher than death will lift it off, and reanimate these forms. The church-yard has been called the land of silence—the Sabbath bell is no longer heard by its slumbering inhabitants. Yet shall the sound of the last trumpet enter the loneliness of their dwelling, and be heard through death's remotest caverns; and this mortal, these mouldering bones, these skeletons and fragments of humanity, shall put on glorious immortality.

The Christian alone, in the exercise of strong faith, can bear the appalling contemplation of the decay and dissolution of himself—to think of the time when his now animated frame-work, so sensitive in every part, and so dear to him, shall fall to pieces—when he shall leave to coldness and abandonment, this form now so

lovely—the limbs which now step so firmly—the countenance out of which he looks so gracefully, and the tongue with which he speaks so eloquently; when all these shall be reduced to one mass of putrefaction, and shall crumble, like the coffin which incloses him, into dust.

If such are the feelings of the Christian, how should the very sound of such words as *life* and *death*, *judgment* and *immortality*, reduce sinners, who are unreconciled to God, to deep seriousness. Amid the business and pleasures which now tempt you away from eternity, we say to you that the very moment of your final farewell, if you are not previously cut off by death—that moment will come, and old age will come, and the last sickness will come, and the dying bed will come, and the last look you shall ever cast on your relations will come, and the agony of the parting breath will come, and the time that you will be stretched a lifeless corpse before the eyes of your weeping relations will come, and the coffin which is to inclose you will come, and that hour when the company assembles to carry you to the church-yard will come, and that moment when you are put into the grave will come, and the throwing in of the earth upon it, all—all will come on every living creature who now hears me. And in a few little years, the minister who now addresses you, and each one who now listens, will be carried to their long home. You may have been careless, or heedless, about these things formerly, but I call upon you now to lay them seriously to heart, and no longer to trifle, or to parley, when the great scenes of life and eternity are set before you. What more shall I say? Shall I carry you beyond the region of sense to the region of faith, and assure you, in the name of him who cannot lie, that when the hour of laying the body in the grave comes, the hour of the spirit's returning to God comes too? Yes, and the day of reckoning will come; and the appearance of the Son of God in Heaven, and his holy angels around him, will come; and the opening of the books will come; and the appearance of every one of you before the judgment seat will come; and the solemn passing of the sentence which is to fix you for eternity, will come; and if you refuse to be reconciled to God in the name of Christ, now that he is beseeching you to repent, and if you refuse to turn from the evil of your ways, and to do and to be what your Saviour requires you to be and to do, I must tell you what the sentence is:—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." To-day, then, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, seeing that *now* is the only accepted time that you can count upon, and that now is the day of salvation."

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 2. Vol. XVI.) FEBRUARY, 1842. (Whole No. 182.

SERMON CCCXVII.

BY THE RIGHT REV. CHARLES P. McILVAINE, D. D.

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF OHIO.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE BISHOPS, CLERGY, AND LAITY, OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IN GENERAL CONVENTION, AT THE CONSECRATION OF

THE REV. ALFRED LEE, D. D.,

TO THE EPISCOPATE OF THE DIOCESE OF DELAWARE, IN ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL, NEW YORK, ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, A. D. 1841.

(PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE CONVENTION.)

"Take heed unto thyself and the doctrine; continue in them: for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."—I Timothy iv. 16.

Both save thyself and them that hear thee!—such is the work committed, of God, to the minister of his word. One would think it were enough for a sinful man, with such corruption within, and such a world around him, to take heed to the saving of his own soul. But when to this is added the saving of them that hear him, well may the bearer of such an office be filled with fear and trembling, for "who is sufficient for these things?" What it is for a soul to be lost, to go down to hell under the anger of Almighty God, and from under all the privileges of the gospel, having to answer, amidst innumerable other sins, for that one most awful sin of receiving the grace of God in vain, of rejecting the precious blood of Christ—we cannot approach the conception of such a destiny—a lost immortal soul—eternity without God, without hope—everlasting wo!

But we turn away to think of the salvation of the soul, through Christ for ever; what it is for a sinner to be confessed of Christ in the great day, as one of his ransomed and beloved brethren; to be received of the Father to his own right hand as one of his adopted, beloved children; then to enter upon the incorruptible inheritance as "joint heir with Christ," like Christ in his glory, with Christ in his

kingdom, seeing him as he is, changed more and more, ever and ever, into the same image; oh, such salvation! What an alarming consideration for us, ministers of the gospel, that whether the sinners that hear us shall attain that blessedness, or go down to that wo, is to so great an extent committed to us, by our faithfulness, or unfaithfulness, to decide!

Two questions arise out of these meditations, and stand before a minister of the gospel in an aspect of magnitude and solemnity, before which all other questions must needs stand aside and keep silence—*what must I do to save my own soul under such responsibility? what must I do to save them that hear me?*

To put in diligent practice the right answer to these questions, is the one great business of him whose high dignity it is to have been put in trust with the gospel, as a preacher of the same. How ought we to "covet earnestly the best gifts" for such a work, and how anxious should we be to mark, learn, and inwardly digest whatever will give us more knowledge, more spiritual discernment, more practical wisdom, more seriousness, singleness and constancy of purpose, more diligence of mind and heart and life, in regard to the infinite interests which this stewardship involves! It is that, under the good blessing of the Lord, I may contribute something to the furtherance of my brethren in the ministry, and especially of that brother who is now to be invested with the chief stewardship of our ministry, in discharging the duties of so high a dignity and so weighty an office, that I have selected the words of the text. They are part of the charge of St. Paul to Timothy, bishop of the church of Ephesus, as to how he should behave himself in the house of God, as a "messenger, watchman, and steward of the Lord." Two distinct *injunctions* are contained in them—*take heed unto thyself—take heed unto the doctrine.* On the faithful keeping of these injunctions ensues an *assurance—thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.*

The most natural order of discourse is often the reversed order of nature. We take up the second of the above injunctions.

I. *Take heed unto the doctrine.*

And here let me begin with directing your attention to the evidence that the *hearing* of the word, by the *preaching* of the same, is that special means of grace by which, under the ordinance of God, the minister of Christ is to seek the salvation of men. By taking heed to our doctrine, as well as to ourselves, it is promised, we shall be instrumental in saving them that *hear* us; whence it follows that doctrine *heard*, and therefore doctrine *preached*, and consequently the preaching of the gospel, as distinct, though not separated, from all other means, is the one great ordinance for the bringing of sinners to repentance, and for the building up of penitent believers in their most holy faith; according as it is written, *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

As to the relative importance of the preaching of the gospel, and

the public worship of the house of God, taking into view the whole object, interest and structure of the church, it is impossible to make any comparison. You might as well compare the head and heart of man, in reference to his life. The one is the great means for one set of objects, the other equally essential for another.

The ministry of the word and the ministry of worship are parts of the same body, equally vital, but of different use. To represent the duty of preaching and hearing God's message in his gospel, as if it were of subordinate importance, as regards the highest interests of the church and of souls, is as erroneous, as to assign the like place to the duty of maintaining, and attending upon, God's worship in the sanctuary. Carefully should both extremes be avoided. We are all, as christians, "*a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices*, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ;" but the distinguishing and leading charge of the Head of that one and only catholic priesthood, to the *ministers* of the same, is "*go, preach the gospel;*" go give light, that there may be love; go, make disciples, that there may be worshipers; go and gather the living stones for the temple, and build them up together, by the line and plummet of the word, upon the one corner stone, "elect and precious," and erect therein an altar composed of hearts renewed and sanctified "*through the truth;*" then will follow the sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise unto God for the unsearchable riches of his grace as made known in his gospel. If the church, in reference to her communion with God, is called his temple, because therein is the daily oblation of his people's praise and prayer; so also in reference to her influence in enlightening the world, through the preaching of the truth, is she represented as the *golden candlestick*, and her ministers as shining stars, held in the right hand and made luminous by the light from the face of the Lord, her sun and glory.

In the holy place of the tabernacle, which was a type of the church in its earthly state, there was the golden candlestick with its seven burning lamps, as well as the altar of incense with its golden censer. These stood equidistant from the entrance to within the veil. While the way into the holiest would have been unhallowed without the one, it could not have been seen without the other. Incense was burned on that altar, morning and evening of every day; but let it be marked, it was always at the time when the priest, evening and morning, trimmed and replenished those ever shining lights. Thus intimately was the symbol of a worshiping church connected with that of a preaching ministry; and thus we are taught by these divinely appointed types to understand that the worship of the sanctuary will be maintained in spirit and in truth, only so long as the gospel shall be preached in purity and faithfulness; and moreover, that the best evidence of faithful preaching is when it promotes the offering of the incense of fervent prayer. But hence comes with the greater impressiveness the injunction, "*take heed unto the doctrine.*"

In speaking further on this portion of our text, we will confine our

attention to two points of care, on the part of a minister; viz. that *his every doctrine be according to the only divine rule of faith*, and that all his doctrines be exhibited, in their several relations, "*according to the proportion of faith.*"

Take heed unto the doctrine that it be ACCORDING TO THE ONLY DIVINE RULE OF FAITH, THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*"—any man, any where; but how much more should we who speak as "ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech men by us." "*Preach the word,*" is the inspired charge, through Timothy, to all generations of preachers. He who magnifies his office as God's messenger, and knows the worth of his own soul, and seeks earnestly the souls of his hearers, and would preach "as one having authority, and not as the scribes," not as the schools—not as man's wisdom teacheth, will not venture one step beyond what he is "persuaded may be concluded and proved by the scripture;" knowing that he "cannot by any other means compass the doing of so great a work; but with doctrine and exhortation taken out of the holy scriptures." The seed he is now to sow in his field has been given to him of the "Father who is the husbandman." To that only is it true that "God giveth the increase." By that only are we ordained to go and bring forth fruit, fruit *that will remain.* To sow any other, and expect from it righteousness, is no wiser than to look for "grapes of thorns or figs of thistles." Even an unrighteous prophet was so afraid of not speaking the oracles of God, that he said, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord: what the Lord saith, that will I speak." *What the Lord saith;* that is our lively oracle. And since we have no evidence that the Lord hath so spoken to his church as to furnish her with any other oracles than those of his holy scriptures; and since of them we have the evidence of divers miracles and prophecies, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, that they are "*given by the inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine;*" we are left to conclude that in them is the only final rule of faith to the church, the only *final authority* to which the minister is to go for the words of eternal life. And hence the introduction of the scriptures so conspicuously, so singly, into the offices of our church, for the ordination and consecration of those who are to feed her flocks; the candidate being required to declare himself "persuaded that the holy scriptures contain all doctrine required as necessary to salvation, and that he is determined, out of the scriptures, to instruct the people committed to his charge, and to teach nothing as necessary to eternal salvation but that which he shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the scripture."

Till recently it was not supposed possible that, under such solemn pledges, the single authority of the scriptures, as alone the oracles of God, could be drawn into question. But strange and mortifying it is to say, that the Protestant church is at this day molested with attempts, within, to introduce for *co-ordinate authority*, that which we had

hoped had long since been finally rejected and protested against, with all other like devices of the Man of Sin for overthrowing the reign of Christ.

Into a consideration of what is now taught on the subject of tradition as the "*authoritative interpreter*" of the scriptures, as constituting with them "*a joint rule of faith*," as proceeding originally from the same fount of inspiration, and so meriting, in this the eighteenth century of its course, an equally reverential regard, we have no intention of entering. The existence of such an apparition in the present age of our Protestant church, has been alluded to for the sake of the strong contrast by which it enables us to show the doctrine of our ordination vows, as above cited, concerning the scriptures as alone the oracles of God; and also that I may urge upon my brethren in the ministry, that whatever evil may come to others from the gathering up of the traditions by the draught of a drag net which embraces the rubbish of even *seven* centuries, for an infallible interpretation of the scriptures; *they*, for themselves, will take heed that the affliction may be so sanctified to them, that by showing them how easily the wisdom of man may be deceived, by a false "angel of light," and how prone it is, under an idea of doing God service, to pervert his plain truth by complex inventions of men, they may be led by the present evil only to search more diligently, follow more simply, and preach more exclusively and fondly the plain text of the bible. Be assured we escape no controversies, but multiply all, by associating with the bible, for *final authority*, the judgments of men, however numerous, learned, holy, or ancient. It is not because the scriptures are not plain enough that divisions in doctrine abound; but because the hearts of men are not honest enough. The same cause would darken any counsel and pervert any rule, and the easier in proportion as the rule was strict and the counsel holy. It is no more to be supposed that God, in providing a revelation for man, would have furnished such means of understanding it, that none could help knowing the doctrine, than that he should have so displayed its evidences, that none could help believing its truth. It is as really our probation whether we will so read the scriptures as to understand their doctrine, as whether we will so read the same as to obey their precept. To seek a rule, in tradition, or in any thing else, by which to prevent the possibility of errors, and divisions, and heresies, concerning the faith, no matter what the jaundice of the eye, or enmity of the heart, is to seek what would be wholly inconsistent with that probation under which we are held, as well for the unbiased use of our understanding, as for the obedient submission of our will. If, notwithstanding all his mighty works, our Lord, in the days of his ministry on earth, did not so reveal himself as that none who saw his miracles could help believing his word, we may be sure, now that miracles have ceased, that he has not so committed the treasure of his truth to earthen vessels, as that none who read can avoid an erroneous or heretical interpretation. The existence of divers opinions as to what is truth,

is no more the evidence that the written word, as a rule of faith, is defective, than the multiplied forms of ungodliness in a christian land are proof of defect in the motives for holy obedience to the moral law. The remedy against error is not in mending the rule by which we measure our doctrines, but in taking the beam out of the eye that judges of their truth; not by making the scripture "profitable for doctrine" by dividing its authority with the traditions of many centuries, but by humbling the reader into a more implicit submission to, and a more entire contentment with, whatever it teaches. "The wayfaring man" who cannot choose his course by taking observations of the sun as it shines in the broad daylight of the scriptures, will little help his accuracy by resorting to the dead reckoning of tradition.

Then let the bible be our only final appeal—the bible in all its parts—the bible in its unutterable mysteries—the bible in its every subordinate statement—the bible meekly received, as "the engrafted word which is able to save our souls," and those that hear us, "through faith in Christ Jesus." But this leads us to the second particular under the injunction of taking heed unto doctrine.

Take heed unto the doctrine, not only that every part be according to the rule, but all parts, in their several relations, so held and exhibited as to be ACCORDING TO THE PROPORTION OF FAITH.

There is a proportion of faith, because there is a body of faith—a system of faith, with a beauty of symmetry in the whole, as well as the parts; a harmony of relation, without a discernment of which the full value of no one member can be understood. In one sense, it is right to say that all parts of revealed truth are essential. Essential to the complete *integrity* of the system they certainly are. In another sense, it is right to say that all parts are not essential. Essential to the *vitality* of religion they certainly are not. There are truths, without the confession of which the soul can live unto God, though it may suffer loss; and there are others, without which it cannot; just as there are members of our bodies without which we can survive, and others without which life must be extinct;—all essential to integrity—not all to vitality. The pattern of the tabernacle which was shown to Moses in the mount had its various parts, from the net work of the outer court, to the most fine gold of the inner sanctuary; and every cord of that net work was as essential to the perfect integrity of the pattern, as any crowning of gold about the mercy seat. But who can say that the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat within the veil were not more vitally important than the whole frame work around them? So, in the doctrine of the gospel, there is a *proportion of importance;* some parts more prominent, more necessary, while none can say to any, "I have no need of thee;" all "compacted together by that which every joint supplieth," all nourished by the same central fountain, animated by one pulse, depending on one head, even Jesus Christ, "from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the in-

crease of God." To preach the truth, in this, its right shape and proportion, is a great duty. All we say may be scriptural; we may keep back no single feature of the whole body of revealed truth; and yet our representations may be so confused, disjointed, unshapen; the greater points so hid in the undue prominence of the less, means so confounded with ends, the stream of life with its channels, the symptoms of health with its properties, outward motion with inward life, the mode of professing with the mode of obtaining grace; no separate statement untrue, but each in its relative bearing so confused, as to leave an impression scarcely better than that of positive error.

Three main objects we must ever seek, if we would save them that hear us, viz. to convince men of their depraved, guilty, lost condition; to show, and lead them to embrace, the sure refuge in Christ, as well that their condemnation may be removed, as their sinfulness purged; and then, when they are "in Christ Jesus," to promote their continual growth in grace, "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." We are to estimate the relative prominence of each doctrine by its connection, more or less intimate, with these great objects. The position of various doctrines in our ministry must be adjusted by our having these objects always foremost. But when it is considered, that in almost every congregation are all grades of hearers, from those who have yet to see their ruined estate, to him who is inquiring the way to the remedy, and then to those who have found Christ, and are "found in him;" that to each class is to be spoken the word in season, and this not once, or twice, but continually, so that every case may be met, every weapon of our warfare used, every snare of the devil encountered, every difficulty of the weak removed, every false hope of the presumptuous exposed; when it is considered how the great variety of circumstances under which we preach, must needs control the manner and proportion in which we are to bring out the several parts of the "whole counsel of God," it must be manifest that what St. Paul calls "*rightly dividing the word of truth*," can be no work for an indolent, heedless, formal laborer. A skill is needed which none can possess, whose own personal experience of the power and preciousness of divine truth, in its application to the various wants of the sinner, is not deep and abiding. The guidance of books can take us but a short way in this duty. Wisdom from above is the only sufficient counsel. Prayer and devout study of the scriptures, with reference continually to the state of our own hearts, are the great means of growing in such wisdom. The way to speak skilfully from God is often to hear him speak. "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned (saith the prophet, giving the language of the Messiah) that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." Yes, brethren, the tongue of such learning, infinitely more precious than any other learning for a minister of the gospel, must be given of the Lord, or we have it not. No wisdom of man can furnish it. It is a learning in which we may advance without end. And the more we realize of the greatness and difficulty of our

work, and the better we are fitted in point of spirit for its duties, the more humbly shall we feel our need of that learning, and the more constantly be found at the feet of Jesus, that we may learn of him.

It must be obvious, brethren, that the limits of this discourse do not allow me to take any more than a glance at the wide range of important topics, to which the injunction of the text, "*take heed unto the doctrine*," directly leads.

Had I more time, I would speak earnestly upon the prominence to be given in our ministry at all times to that great topic which St. Paul considered of such overmastering claims that he desired to preach and live, as if knowing nothing else, among men—"*Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*" The person, and offices of Christ; what he has done to save sinners; what he is now doing at the right hand of God for all that come unto God by him; the universal embrace of his atonement; the full, free, and complete salvation provided, in his death and intercession, for the chief of sinners; the boundless love which that death displays; the precious invitations and promises which proceed therefrom; the nature of that godly sorrow—that spiritual regeneration, that true conversion, by which alone the sinner can be turned unto the Lord; the nature and agency of that living faith, by which alone the penitent heart embraces the atonement, puts on the righteousness of Christ, is justified freely and perfectly through the imputation of that righteousness, as soon as he believes with the heart, and thus is "accepted in the beloved," as completely as if he had never sinned; the prominence, the constancy, the devotedness, the earnestness with which a minister of Christ should preach these chief doctrines, with the several truths directly and necessarily connected therewith; then the great importance of scriptural simplicity in the mode of presenting them, so that their aim may not be hindered by confusion of purpose, nor their point blunted by fear of offence, nor their force weakened by combination with "words of man's wisdom," but that the truth, "as it is in Jesus," may be delivered in the spirit of Jesus, according to "the mind of Christ," so that the blind may see and the feeblest mind may understand, and sleeping consciences may be aroused. Then the great importance of making all our preaching doctrinal, and yet all our doctrine practical; never severing the truth from the duty which results from it, nor ever preaching the duty without the doctrinal principle on which it depends; never representing gospel doctrine as if it could have any vital interest with us or real faith, only as it is embraced in the heart and carried out in the life; nor ever, any more, exhibiting gospel practice as if it were possible that it should exist, in any degree, only upon the single basis of distinctive gospel doctrine; all these are most important matters indeed, but at which we can do no more than thus briefly glance. I trust the very imperfect view which has now been given, may, under divine blessing, be the means of impressing more deeply upon my brethren in the ministry, "how studious they ought to be in reading and learning the scriptures; and for this selfsame cause, how they ought

to forsake and set aside, as much as they may, all worldly cares and studies—giving themselves wholly to this office whereunto it hath pleased God to call them, so that, as much as lieth in them, they may apply themselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all their cares and studies this way, and continually pray for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost, that by daily reading and weighing the Scriptures they may wax riper and stronger in their ministry." Thus, with increasing wisdom, will they learn to preach the truth, the truth *only* and *entirely*, the truth as it all leads to Christ, testifies of Christ, derives its power and preciousness from Christ; and the truth *seasonably*, rightly divided and appropriated according to the various wants and conditions of the hearers. But we must proceed to the second injunction of the text.

II. *Take heed unto thyself.*

With great wisdom, indeed, does the apostle enjoin the minister to take heed to his doctrine, by first taking heed to himself; the clearness of our perceptions of truth depending so greatly on the purity of our affections towards it; the vigor and simplicity of our study of christian doctrine depending so essentially upon the submissiveness of our hearts to the will of God, and our abiding sense of the infinite value of his every word. "There is (says Bishop Taylor) in the things of God, to them which practise them, a deliciousness that makes us love them, and that love admits us into God's cabinet, and strangely clarifies the understanding by the purification of the heart. So long as we know God only in the ways of man, by contentious learning, by arguing and dispute, we see nothing but the shadow of him. But when we know him with the eye of holiness and the intuition of gracious experiences, with a quiet spirit and the peace of enjoyment; then we shall hear what we never heard, and see what our eyes never saw; then the mysteries of godliness shall be opened unto us, and clear as the windows of the morning—for though the scriptures themselves are written by the Spirit of God, yet they are written *within and without;* and besides the light that shines upon the face of them, unless there be a light shining within our hearts, unfolding the leaves and interpreting the mysterious sense of the Spirit, convincing our consciences and preaching to our hearts; to look for Christ in the leaves of the gospel, is to look for the living among the dead."

How much reason have we to suppose, as we read the history of the church, that it is to a heart inexperienced in divine things, insensible to its own corruptions, and its need of the sanctification of the Spirit, having never "tasted that the Lord is gracious," and therefore having never desired, "as a new born babe, the sincere milk of the word;" or if essentially given to God, living in a perpetual winter of spiritual life, with all its spiritual appetites and discernment in bondage to a spirit of self indulgence and worldliness, so that pride and ease, and the fear of man and the easily besetting sin, have had much to say on every question of doctrine and duty; how much reason to

suppose that to such an *unheeded self* are to be ascribed the most lamentable errors of doctrine which have plagued the church, as well as much of the confusedness and feebleness with which the truth has been often held and preached.

"*Keep thy heart with all diligence*, (saith the wise man,) *for out of it are the issues of life.*" Yea, minister of Christ, "*with all diligence*," for on the state of thy heart depend all the issues of life in thy ministry. The minister, in his public work, is in a great degree what, as a christian, he is in his secret exercises of heart, with God. Out of his praying and watching comes his effectual preaching. As he takes heed to his own soul, will he see carefully, faithfully, to the souls of others.

But let us bring the injunction of the text within more definite bounds. Our first application of it then is—

I. "Take heed to thyself," that thou be a *genuine disciple of Christ, truly converted unto God.* What an awful thing for a man to say that he trusts he is "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost" to this office and ministration, if he have no reason to trust that he has ever so far received the Holy Ghost as to have repented of his sins and become, except in sacramental profession, a child of God. But that such cases do occur, it were not charity, but blindness, to question. Alas! to preach to others, and even be instrumental in bringing some of them to Christ for ever, and then ourselves be cast away! Did even St. Paul feel the need of the greatest care lest such should be his case? How much more should we take heed that it be not ours. "*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith!*" There are circumstances which render a minister peculiarly liable to put a favorable estimate on his state. That busy employment and familiar contact with spiritual things which, if we are alive towards God, promotes our growth in grace, will, if we are living in a merely formal state, but confirm our formality. That which one may be doing only as a minister, he may easily be persuaded is done only as a christian; mere professional consistency may easily appear as if it were pious obedience; a certain degree of interest in the ministry and love for the church, for her dignified order and venerable forms of worship, which may arise from no higher source than our being personally identified therewith, or their being associated with a long retrospect of centuries and the history of a noble army of martyrs; this, joined to a reverential familiarity with the scriptures, a blameless life before men, a ready sympathy in the cause of humanity, a zeal for what we think true doctrine, and to bring others to its adoption, and then its being taken for granted by those around us that we are truly christian men because christian ministers—all this may easily persuade us that all is well within, while, in the sight of God, there may be no spiritual life in us. Oh, let us fear lest, while distributing bread to the poor, we perish with want; lest while inviting sinners to put on the righteousness of Christ, by faith, we should not touch so much as the hem of his garment. To worship an unknown God, preach an

unknown Savior, and yet be answerable for the whole work of an ambassador of Christ, what a fearful state! Our Lord has warned us that in the great day there will be many who will be found in this condemnation—men who, when the door is shut and they shall be standing without, dreadfully dismayed, will plead their ministry:—"Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" but to whom will issue the irrevocable sentence—"*Depart, all ye workers of iniquity.*" Their fall will be from "the pinnacle of the temple;" their plunge the deeper into everlasting fire. God grant unto us, not only that we may always preach the whole gospel, but in doing so, may speak what we do personally know, and testify what we have seen, and felt, and followed.

But the minister of Christ must take heed unto himself that he be not only a man of true piety, but of *eminent piety: not only in grace, but growing in grace—a lively and flourishing christian.* I would, therefore, urge the unspeakable importance that men of God, standing in the holy place of his temple, and charged with all his messages to mankind, should aim at exalted attainments in grace. And in doing this, I would confine my remarks to the necessity of high attainments in piety, *for the faithful, persevering, successful prosecution of the various duties of the ministry.*

The tide of our faithfulness, in the main channel, and in all the minor branches and inlets of duty, will ebb and flow precisely as the well of living water which is in us, from Christ, shall spring up, feebly, or vigorously, unto everlasting life. Is the heart of our piety beating strongly for God? Every sermon, every pastoral duty will feel its bounding pulse. Baxter said, "I publish to my flock the distempers of my own soul. When I let my heart grow cold, my preaching is cold; and when it is confused, my preaching is confused. We are the nurses of Christ's little ones. If we forbear taking food ourselves, we shall famish them. If we let our love decline, we are not likely to raise theirs."* It requires but little reflection to perceive not only that all the parts of divine truth must be greatly affected in our conceptions, and representations, and applications of them, by the state of religion in our hearts, but that a very large and most interesting portion of the subject matter of our preaching must be presented so formally and artificially, except our religious affections be in a tender, earnest, growing state, that for the most part it will be left out, and other matter more easily treated by a cold heart, will be substituted. To exhibit the commandments and penalties of the law, with the great outlines of the way of salvation, by the gospel; to depict, in general terms, the wisdom, excellence, and benefit of a religious life; to warn the impenitent by the terrors of the Lord: to vindicate christian doctrine, exhort to diligence in all duty, speak of the shortness and uncertainty of human life, and describe the awfulness of an

* Reformed Pastor.

unforgiven sinner; to do all this, and much more of the same kind, with force, feeling, plainness, usefulness, is comparatively easy where there is a real piety, though it be not a piety of much life. But when we come to the more secret ways and dealings of the Lord with his people: when the object is to lead the christian believer within the inner veil, and show him that interior sanctuary of the grace of God into which the natural man cannot look: when the promises of God, in all their fulness of love and consolation, and the privileges of the sons of God in all their glory, are to be displayed; when, not in the thunder, nor the earthquake, nor the blast of trumpet, the christian is to be made to hear the words of his covenant God, but in "*the still, small voice*," of divine compassion and tenderness; when the duty is to encourage the timid, revive the desponding, strengthen the weak, persuade the unwilling, by such arguments as spring from the amazing love of Christ to sinners, and his being "able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," then to speak "the truth as it is in Jesus," requires a kind of intimacy therewith which nothing but close, habitual, affectionate intercourse of heart can give. These are notes which only the higher strings of our harp, and those fresh tuned and high strung to the praise of God, can reach. These are the secrets of the Lord, of which words can only reveal the types and shadows; and of which we can only speak as the Lord would have us speak, in proportion as, like the angels, we are constantly "*desiring to look*" into them, and for this purpose are much "with God in the mount," and so become "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Hence it is that we have not a larger proportion of such preaching: that the tenderness of God's compassion and love to draw the hearts of sinners is not oftener used, instead of the awfulness of his wrath: that christian duties are not oftener set out in the company of the christian's privileges: that divine commandments are not more enforced by divine promises: the barrenness of the wilderness of our pilgrimage displayed as connected with the fulness of that Rock that follows us, and which makes streams in the desert: the duty of implicit obedience and daily self denial, associated with the equal duty of rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, the shepherd often ascending with his flock to some mount of blessing, and contemplating with them "the rest that remaineth for the people of God." A heart in spiritual dulness and languor has no skill for the handling of such themes, and is afraid of them. There may remain all our wonted powers of reasoning, force of description, liveliness of imagination, readiness in exposition; but all lacking the only wing that can float in that higher element of spiritual truth. Many a popular and awakening preacher never attains that height. But what a large part of the whole counsel of God must needs be kept back, or delivered most defectively; how much of the glory of God, which it is his people's privilege, "with open face," to behold in the gospel, must be held in reserve: how much of the bread provided of

God for the daily feeding of his people, must be kept under the hand of the Priest within the veil, if there be not an unction, an aptness of heart, for the treatment of these themes, arising out of a near intimacy of experience with them.

What is most required for such views, and their appropriate exhibition and cordial enforcement, is a deep experience of the power of divine things upon our own affections, hopes, and spiritual enjoyment; a deep sense of the preciousness of the several parts of gospel truth, as they all centre in Christ. Eminently is it true of such views that "*they are spiritually discerned.*" According to St. Paul, we must be "*rooted and grounded in love,*" that we "may be able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." The deep places of contrition and of humility are most needful aids in such contemplations. We see the stars in the day time, by going down into a pit. How full of instruction concerning the preparation of spirit for the bearing of the message of the gospel, is that chapter wherein Isaiah speaks of his seeing the Lord, with the seraphim standing before him. The Lord had a message to be delivered to his people Israel. But, before the prophet could be prepared to be the bearer thereof, he must be cast down in self abasement as a sinner, unworthy of any such honor. The way to this was a view of God in his infinite majesty and holiness. He "saw the Lord, high and lifted up," his train filling the temple, and before him the winged and veiled seraphim, crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." The prophet could not bear the view. Self abasement at once appeared. "*Wo is me, (he cried,) for I am a man of unclean lips.*" His next preparation for the message was hope and peace with God, through the sacrifice of atonement. One of the seraphim came down and took a live coal from the altar of sacrifice, and touched his lips, and his sin was purged. Then was he ready to say, "*Here am I, send me.*" Oh! my brethren, the more we see of the holiness of God, and the more we are led by the view to humble ourselves before him, as miserable sinners, and continually to find consolation in the sacrifice of Christ alone, through the coming down of the Holy Spirit, taking of the things of Christ, and showing and applying them to our hearts, the more we shall be prepared for the work of the Lord, and be ready with alacrity of spirit to say, in view of any duty, "*Here am I, send me.*"

But this part of our subject is too wide, and I am enlarging too far. Were there time, it would be profitable to consider how an earnest state of pious affections will contribute to furnish endless variety to our discourses, filling the mouth with arguments, which otherwise would not be thought of; causing us to see passages of scripture in various aspects and applications, in a beauty and richness of interest which otherwise would not appear; making old views to return with fresh interest, by being seen through a growing engagedness of heart,

and from ever changing and higher positions in the way of our pilgrimage.

Then, again, *opportunities of usefulness*, how do they multiply, how ingenious we become in discovering and making them, when once we are all alive to their value and improvement! Trials and discouragements, such as we have constantly to meet in carrying our messages to a world lying in wickedness; all those frosts and mists under which we are so tempted to complain and despond, to seek little and expect less, how is their evil changed to good, by the alchemy of a truly spiritual mind; how will a heart animated and buoyant with faith and love, mount over all waves of opposition or affliction, as a life boat in a storm! What lightness and alacrity will it have in all duty! "*I will run the way of thy commandments* (saith David) *when thou hast enlarged my heart.*" Yes, verily, the secret of all diligence, energy, pleasure, success in duty, is a heart enlarged by the love of God. Then are the crooked ways made straight, and the rough ways plain, "*the lame man leaps as the hart,*" "*the tongue of the dumb sings.*" "*For the love of Christ constraineth us.*" Oh! that golden chain of perfect freedom; that binding yoke of most sweet and willing bondage! See St. Paul, the bondsman of Christ, going out to his daily service of labors and perils, chanting his morning song, and saying, "Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Yea, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong." "Strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," was St. Paul. But his strength was the strength of faith. And his strong faith worked by constraining, overcoming love, and thus he was "fruitful in every good work and ever increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to God's glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." What a poor thing, in the ministry of the gospel, is the man of great learning and eloquence and force of argument, whose preaching wants the vital warmth and spiritual earnestness of a single zeal for Christ and love for the souls of men. Weigh him in the balance of the sanctuary! Estimate him in view of the judgment day! Think of him as he will appear when he and all are receiving the fruits of embracing or rejecting the gospel! Compare him, before God, with the man of far inferior gifts, who to the Master's work unites the Master's spirit, and does, with all his heart, as though God did beseech men by him, pray them to be reconciled to God. With how many tongues does the latter preach. If any forget his words, none can forget his evident sincerity and solemn earnestness. The sermon from the lips may not be retained. The sermon preached by the whole spirit of the man, as of one realizing the weight of his message, and the worth of souls, cannot pass away.

Think, moreover, of the power of the daily example of one who

thus lives under the impression of the word he preaches, feeding upon the bread, relying upon the hopes, maintaining the daily walk with God which he entreats others to adopt. His sermons are only occasional. His example is always. His sermons are only in the church. His example is wherever he goes. His sermons all may not fully understand. His example is a universal language. The child, the man, the gainsayer and the believer, alike understand it and must read it, and take impressions from it, concerning the soul, and eternity, and Christ, and holiness.

Think, moreover, of the unseen influence, added to the public ministry of such a man of God, from his nearness to the throne of grace, and his greater faith and constancy in prayers for those that hear him. He has them, as St. Paul had the Philippians, *in his heart;* so that *they all are partakers of his grace*, and *he longs after them all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.* Thus the weapons of his warfare become "mighty through God," and many are added to the Lord.

CONCLUSION.

But I must conclude, not however without a few words upon the precious assurance of the text—"*In so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.*" Thou shalt save thyself! What a motive to diligence, faithfulness, earnestness, constancy till death! Think, dear brethren, of the blessedness of that day, when the Lord and Head of the church shall say to each of us, if found faithful, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Let us animate our hearts with thoughts of such bliss; especially when the burden is great and the trials of patience are many, and the temptation is strong to yield to the current of worldliness around us, and do our Master's work coldly, negligently, living unto ourselves, seeking our own ease, then let us think of our own souls, and look forward to what God hath prepared in his kingdom for faithful servants, till our hearts burn within us for "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

But, "*them that hear thee*" shalt thou also save. Thou shalt be the instrument, under God, of saving them from eternal anguish, and making them partakers of everlasting joy. Oh! the flood of joy that will come over the soul of the faithful minister of Christ, when after having found his own election sure, he shall see the many blessed, glorified saints, in the same inheritance, whom his ministry, through grace, did bring there, and when next to the honor they render unto him who washed them in his blood, they shall come about him to call him blessed, and acknowledge the sweet fruits of his labors to their souls. Ah! we know not what we shall be. Little can we conceive of such bliss. We know something now of the joy of beholding a sinner turned unto God through our ministry. But our love to the souls of men, our estimate of their value, our benevolence, is so feeble. How little we know what is done, when a soul is saved. But then,

when we shall have gone to Christ, "we shall be like him;" like him in the tenderness of his compassion and the fulness of his love; like him in the joy with which he will behold the multitudes without number of his redeemed and glorified church. Then shall we know the blessedness of having been instrumental in saving them that heard us. We shall meet them ever and ever, for eternity, in their glory, and every new sight of them will be to us fresh fulness of joy. Such the motive of faithfulness in our work! Such the argument for taking heed to ourselves and our doctrine! The Lord help us! The Lord bless his word at our lips! The Lord look down from heaven upon his servant, now to be made a shepherd of his shepherds, and his flocks, under him the chief "Shepherd and Bishop of souls," and grant him grace for all his work, so that in spite of all the opposition of the devil, the flesh and the world, he may both save his own soul and the souls of them that hear him, through the in-working Spirit, and the interceding righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ!

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

SERMON CCCXVIII.

By Rev. JAMES G. HAMNER,

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THE SUDDENNESS OF CHRIST'S COMING.

"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man."—Luke xxii. 26.

God's great object in speaking to us in the bible, is to rouse every soul to fly from the place of peril, and to lure guilty and unhappy wanderers, by the narrow way, into the rest remaining in heaven.

To compass these gracious ends, he has spoken in the whisperings of love, and in the thunderings of wrath, in the persuasions of boundless goodness, and in the threatenings of infinite authority; in the yearnings of deep compassion, and in the sternness of holy indignation.

To enforce these addresses, he has invoked the histories of the past and of the future. The banishment of sinning angels from light, and their incarceration under chains of darkness; the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from antediluvian rebels, and their devotement to de-

ction by the deluge of waters; the absolute degeneracy and total consumption of the inhabitants of the vale of Siddim by fire from the Lord out of heaven; the leaving of Jerusalem desolate, and gathering all the elements of wrath and implements of war to sweep it as with the besom of destruction; and the great day of doom in which the Lord Almighty shall make inquisition for blood, and burn up all the works of men, and purify this polluted globe as with fire—are all made to glow together in the fearful picture of God's strange works, that all men may take warning and fly from the wrath to come.

And then in the contrast, the glory and felicity of the elect angels; the salvation of Noe from so terrible an overthrow; the security of Lot from devouring fire; the safety of all the saints that fled, on the momentary retreat of the Roman legion, to Pella; and the everlasting redemption from sin and wrath and hell of all that follow Christ our Lord in the regeneration, are thrown, to burn together in another glorious picture, to draw the guilty, trembling, desponding, and anxious sons of men into the path of purity and peace—into the "many mansions" of God in heaven.

The text holds forth, as in the light of cloudless day, two terrific and overwhelming catastrophes to rouse the world from their guilty stupor, to quicken their escape from the emptyings of the vials of wrath, that they may find safety and rest at the foot of the cross of Jesus.

One of these catastrophes is past—the other is yet to come. The earth has already been wrapt in the coverings of waters, as in swaddling bands; it is yet to be enveloped in sheets of living flame, and burnt to a cinder. "The world that then was being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."—2 Pet. iii. 6, 7, 10.

If God should speak now from heaven into every man's ear and to every man's soul, the assurance that all the present generation shall witness this great day ere death comes upon them—what trembling anxiety—what terrific alarm—what wakeful vigilance—what steadfast resolution—and what untiring efforts to be ready to meet the Lord at his second coming, would possess and exhaust the globe's inhabitants! Every novel sign in the heavens above and the earth beneath—every flash of lightning—every peal of thunder—every rush of the stormy elements—every volcanic eruption—and every heaving or rocking of the earthquake, would startle the guilty dwellers on earth, and make them look up for the last appearing of the Son of God without sin—unto the salvation of all that believe.

But men strangely forget that the day of death is to each one *the day of judgment*. For, as death comes upon us and leaves us, fallen in the dust of the grave, so *judgment* will find us, when, by the power of God, all the dead shall be raised. The circum-

stances under which we are placed, and death stealing upon us like the thief at the dead hour of midnight, or like the lion crouching and creeping softly upon his prey, should hold us all waking, should hasten our flight into the bosom of redeeming love and mercy.

The text instructs us in *two* points of comparison. 1. The *condition* of the world before the flood, and before the last conflagration. 2. The resistless rush of many waters, lightnings, and volcanic elements, and the quenchless kindlings of fire in the earth's bowels and in the atmospheric air.

I. The *condition* of the world before the flood, and before the last conflagration.

Of the abounding wickedness and lawless desperation of men before the flood, there can be but one judgment: but of what shall be the state of the world just preceding the last conflagration, there have been, and are still different opinions.

Some have supposed that Christ shall reign a thousand years with the faithful on earth personally, between the first resurrection and the completion of beatitudes; that Jerusalem shall be rebuilt in its splendor, and Palestine shall be the land of Christ's personal reign; that the *first* resurrection shall be restricted to martyrs and confessors; but after the downfall of Antichrist, all the just shall be raised up; that all *then* alive on the earth shall be continued through the thousand years; and that through all this period, all the saints shall possess the delights of an earthly paradise, as the great Captain of salvation shall reign over them.

Several passages of scripture are supposed to warrant this theory; but chiefly that in *Rev.* xx. 1—6.

But the true idea of the millenium seems to be something like this: That the church is to come up to a very high state of efficiency and prosperity never known before; that this state shall continue, through the space of a thousand years; or, using a *definite* for an *indefinite* term of years, through a very considerable space of time. During this time, the work of salvation shall be pushed to wide extent and to great glory; life shall be greatly prolonged; the early regeneration of men shall bring them, in the freshness of youth, into the kingdom; successive generations shall be mostly saved: so that on the whole, many thousands shall be saved, where one shall be finally lost.

This shall be of course a state and period of great happiness and glory. The Jews shall be converted from their delusions, and brought to receive the Messiah, in Jesus Christ. And his spiritual dominion shall be confirmed over all nations and kindreds and tribes in a most wonderful and illustrious manner. Great knowledge in all departments of research, great concord and peace and love shall prevail and bless the earth. Robberies and murders, crimes and wars shall end. Governments shall rest on fair, just, and humane foundations; and shall be administered on the principles of equity, truth, and righteousness. The various employments of life, and all the ramified explorations of men into nature's arcana, shall be pushed successfully, and be sanctified. Above all else the bible will be more highly and correctly ap-

preciated; its perfect harmony in all its parts will be more distinctly perceived; its matchless superiority will be frankly owned; and its living, divine energy, will be felt by millions on millions of minds. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

This state of the church and of the world will run through the seventh thousand years of time. It will grow up and spread over all the earth's ends by degrees. It will be nearly complete before the end of six thousand years.

The rapid and amazing revolutions of empires, the striking accomplishments of prophecies, the multiplying of energetic and devoted missionaries, and the opening up of a highway from the ends of the world in these latter days, seem to cast out strong indications that this glorious and felicitous state is now coming up over the earth. The signs of the times, which God is hanging out of the moral heavens, surely are many, and ominous of vast events.

But, after all the achievements of truth, after all the triumphs of grace, after all the demonstrations of the Holy Ghost, and after all the displays of the presence of the mighty God of Jacob in the minds of the earth and of the church, there will still be wicked men on earth. St. Peter says: "There shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. This and other parallel scriptures look to the end of the world and the setting of the general judgment.

But to the contrast.

1. In *the days of Noe.*—The careful antiquary can have little doubt, that the antideluvian generations of men were profoundly versed in all kinds of learning; that they carried the various handicrafts to the highest degrees of excellence and perfection; and that they were an excessively luxurious and infidel portion of mankind. Their protracted lives and practised tact gave them opportunities to accumulate vast stores of knowledge, to push improvements in all arts and sciences to great extent; and their luxurious habits of living and God's forbearance towards them in this living, begot in them a sort of omnipotence of sensualism, and ministered abundant aliment to their infidelity; so that they disregarded the zealous and pointed preaching of faithful Noe, pampered their lusts, cried, 'Peace! peace!' when sudden destruction was impending over them, and scouted the threatened judgments of the Almighty. Noe preached righteousness, and coming destructions; but they would not believe. Noe wrought at his ark, and so joined example with precepts, to work alarm into their secure souls, and to move them to repent and avert the judgments of God, as Nineveh did. But they laughed him to scorn, and walked on in the ways of transgression and death. So it was when Lot preached the doctrines and laws of righteousness. His wanton, lascivious, and beastialized townsmen, fat upon the abundance of God's bounty, in that luxuriant vale, now flooded by the waters of

the Dead Sea, rejected them as foolish and whining cant, gave a loose to all the fires of their lusts, thrust aside all the rebuke of this stranger, and hurried madly on to their doom.

And so it was too when the Son of God came and promulged his expositions of the law, held forth to merited contempt the destructive glosses of the doctors, brought out into the cloudless light of eternity the exalted spirituality of the economy of redemption, and made it most clear that *salvation* or *perdition* turns upon faith in him, or unbelief in the record God gave of him, and forewarned his contemporaries of the dreadful calamities and judgments they were bringing swiftly upon their city and nation.

"Jesus said unto them, see ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. Learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven; but my Father only." But did he, who came to his own, gain any credence? Did his own kindred and nation believe the prophetic affirmations of God made flesh and dwelling with them? No. But did their unbelief stay the fulfilling of these prophecies of God, as to what he was about to do to the wicked for all their flagrant wickedness? No! no! The great plans of God Almighty rolled swiftly on, and his tremendous purposes were fully executed upon the unbelieving.

Look back with holy trembling to the several periods, and to the several preachers of those periods, to which we have adverted. See—the flood came, the fire from God out of heaven came, and the Roman legions came clad in all the terrors of war. Then the world was drowned, and the dwellers in Siddim were consumed, and Jerusalem was overwhelmed with sorrows unequaled in the histories of warfare and in the sackings of cities.

So, in many respects, it will be when the end of this world shall come. While *then* the proportion of believers and of unbelievers shall be reversed from what it now is, the *believers* shall swell to the high numberings that now belong to the unbelieving, and the *unbelieving* shall dwindle down to the small amount of present believers, still the wicked will be very desperate in their deeds and strides in evil doings. The fear of God will be cast off under the clear revelations of divine truths, and the pungent application of them to their hearts. And sinning on, despite all God's dealings, declarations, and judgments, Pharaoh-like, they will grow into more adamantine insensibility and impious resistance against the arm of the Most High. As there were giants in the earth in ancient days; so there will be giants in wickedness and rebellion in the earth when the Son of Man shall appear the second time, in the clouds of heaven, taking vengeance on his foes. There will be scoffers, in that day, jeering at bible predictions and

threatenings, and walking after their own lusts. They will reckon it as absurd and impossible that the world should be burned up with fire, as the antideluvians did, that it should have been drowned by water. 2 *Pet* iii. 3—13.

2. In *the days of Noe.—Then* men pursued their various avocations and pleasures without any disquieting apprehensions of sudden death or coming judgment. Their minds were engrossed with schemes for augmenting riches, for concentrating applause, admiration, and honor from men, and for accelerating the tide of pleasurable indulgences and enjoyments. Their noble, cultivated, and largely furnished minds, were immersed in the turbid and poisonous waters of sensual and earthly things. They could find no time to spare to acquire true, unseen, and eternal riches, and pleasures, and honors, though their lives were spread out through hundreds of years; yet they could find no time to seek the things of God and of heaven. "Before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."

So then, at the last great day, when the Son of God shall come to judge the world, men will be, in like manner, swallowed up with the pageant objects and scenes of this vain world. The things seen and temporal will exclude from their minds and hearts the immense spiritual interests of their souls and of eternity. The riches of time will absorb their capacities of thought and of feeling. Honor's gaudy and dazzling exhibits will bewilder and confound. The spell of the enchantress, pleasure, will still hold men bound as in chains and fetters of iron. They will refuse to entertain the idea of danger at hand. They will claim to expect things to abide as they are and ever have been. They will live on in sin and forgetfulness of God, as men now do. They will not heed the steady approach of death; nor suffer themselves to think of his sudden and fatal arrest. Unbelieving of the vast interest at stake, uncaring to escape from hell, or fly to heaven, they will be overwhelmed as with the suddenness of a falling thunderbolt, when the heavens are without a cloud.

II. When then all things shall be moving uniformly on, as they have always moved, suddenly, as the lightning flashes, that great catastrophe will break upon the astounded sons of earth. O! how they will be overwhelmed! How they will shriek and call to the rocks and the mountains to hide them from the face of him who sits upon the throne!!

Noe's contemporaries laughed him to scorn, when he predicted the rising, rushing, overflowing of the waters, and kept himself, with all his resources, employed in completing the ark. That incredulous race of men cultivated their farms, sold their merchandise, enlarged their store houses, added farm to farm, and house to house; intrigued in canvassing political topics, contended in legislative halls, struggled for place and for power, and reveled in sensual pleasures and debauch, up to the very hour in which the lightnings began to play, the

thunders began to peal, the bars of the great deep began to burst, heaven's windows began to fly open, the floods began to rise and swell above the banks, and the high hills, and the lofty mountain tops.

So will it be when the last day shall break upon this oblivious and sin-burdened world. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left. Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

True, men know the histories of the past, how God dealt in stern justice with the antideluvians, how he dealt in stern justice with the filthy Sodomites, how he dealt with the infuriate inhabitants of Jerusalem, and how he is dealing daily and hourly with their guilty companions in pride and guilt and shame, and how he has foretold he will mete out due tribulations upon the impenitent and the unbelieving and disobedient at last; and after all, they will yield themselves up to the tyrannic control of the world's various and multiplied and clamorous cares, and hopes, and expectations, and plans, and pursuits, and gains, and toils, and vanities, and pride, and ease, and pleasures.

But this high display of folly—of downright madness, will not stay the dread outpourings of heaven's hot displeasure and devouring vengeance. The consuming flood of flames will come. The mighty billows of liquid fire will roll and thunder; but where, O! where will deluded and helpless and exposed millions fly for shelter, for a hiding place? While some shall be casting up the mighty sums of their treasures on earth, and some shall be expanding and improving their schemes for the increase of gain, and some shall be grappling antagonists in church and in state, in the contests for eminence of place and superiority of power, and some shall be wafted on the strong and steady breezes of prosperity, and some shall be thwarted and cast down and oppressed by the hard and heavy hand of adversity, and some shall be swilling at the founts of intoxicating drink, and some shall be manufacturing "distilled damnation," and some shall be retailing it and fattening their households upon unhallowed gains, and some shall be wallowing as swine in their styes, in the abominable pollutions of brothels, and some shall be gliding through the mazy dance to the notes of the viol, and through scenes of revelry, and theatrical shows, and deep forgetfulness of the eternal future; *then*, suddenly the earth will begin to heave and to rock; the fires irrepressible will begin to blaze out from one part under heaven to another, concentrated peals of rattling thunder shall break in one dread clash from pole to pole. The sun will turn to darkness, the moon will turn to blood, the stars will fall from heaven like shriveled fig leaves, and the heavens themselves shall pass away with a great noise.

How easily will God prostrate the loftiest towers and proudest monuments of human pride, vanity, and glory; and level all their palaces and habitations in promiscuous heaps of ruin, as recently he did in the tornado's pathway across a southern promontory. One

moment, all will be security and inapprehension, all domestic economy will be advancing, and guests will be sharing the hospitalities of friendship; the next moment, all will be wild confusion, and darkness, and terrors, and shrieks, and groans, and destructions, and death. Then the archangel's trump shall sound, then all the dead shall live, then all the progeny of Adam shall stand in waiting posture for the coming Judge. The heavens shall part, and on clouds the Judge shall come in all the glory of ten thousand suns, and attended by ten thousand times ten thousands of thousands of angels, strong in might, and swift in obedience, as executioners of his pleasure. Yes, one long and loud blast of the trump of God Almighty, will gather all Adam's race to the tribunal of the last great day. O! what a day of wonders, and of decisions, that will be!

But why do we look and gaze across the narrow chasm betwixt *this* day, and *that* day, seeing every hour transmits so many thousands of undying souls into eternity? O! how suddenly does death come every hour, every minute, every breath! How many well laid plans for gains, and honors, and pleasures, are utterly broken up, as quick as thought! How many prospects, once fair and full of promise, are instantly overcast with the blackness of darkness! How many thousands on thousands are left on this cheerless earth, all dreary, and friendless, and comfortless, and heart-broken, and death-stricken! All the dead—where, O! where are they? All the living —whither, O! whither do they pass in such retardless haste? Into vast, vast eternity they are plunged; up to judgment, to eternal judgment they fly!!

In view of these solemn and moving truths, I ask,

1. For what did the Son of God thus advert to these tremendous —these overwhelming events in the past, and to that awful, tragical event yet to come upon the world? Was it for the sake of a startling, thrilling appeal? and a sublime exhibit of his matchless grandeur and majesty? No, was it not rather to break up the *leaden slumbers* of the careless and the inebriates of pleasure? To stimulate the heedless and unthinking, to fasten their thoughts and meditations upon the immense scenes and objects before them? To rouse up the lethargic and indifferent to take hold on the hope in the bosom of the gospel, and to save the perishing wicked as by the hand of benevolent violence? What profound consideration then does the great subject before us demand of each one? We are involved in the ruins of sin, we lie under the ban of the Almighty's empire. "The soul that sins, it shall die." I ask again:

2. Has God not provided amply for the escape of "every creature" from the wrath to come? Is not the object of all such sublime and terrific language, to give men a due apprehension of their perilous condition, and to awaken them to fly from the terrors and destructions of the last great day? The object is *benevolent*, and ought to be so adjudged, and appreciated accordingly. Men ought not to turn away from the friend that faithfully and truly exposes their condition and prospects, that they may escape absolute ruin.

Men ought not to separate two things that God has joined indissolubly, and thereby peril their souls. God calls every man to *believe* and *obey* the gospel. They that do, shall live; but they that will not, shall perish miserably.

Noe escaped the watery flood by *faith* and by *obedience* to God. If he had said, "O yes, the word of God will be accomplished, the flood will come," but then sat still in idleness, all his faith would have availed him nothing: or, if he had toiled hard at some device of his own, regardless of God's counsel, all his labor would have been of no avail. But he *believed* God's word and *obeyed* his mandates, and was saved. Thus it was also with Lot, and with the disciples who escaped from Jerusalem and fled to Pella. Why now should any of us neglect the only way of salvation, and perish from the presence of the Lord? Why should any neglect so great salvation? What will it profit us to possess ten thousand worlds for a day—and then lie down in hell torment for ever?

I ask yet this once:

3. *When* will you pause? *When* will you ponder your ways? *When* will you return unto the Lord of grace and glory, *with all your hearts?* Is there not a needs-be, that you fly to the arms of the Son of God, who has been delivered up to shame and to death, that, "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life? God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Is not *this your* time? Have you another moment you can call your own? *Now* is the accepted time; *this* is the day of salvation. The present moment is freighted with all the vast interests of your souls and of eternity. If you let it fly away unappropriated for good, may you not irreparably lose your all? Can you recall a past moment? Can you regain the imperishable interests it has carried away with it? Will you, can you, dare you sin on in view of all that is at stake, and of that great and terrible day of the Lord, which will break so suddenly, so unexpectedly upon the world?

O! ye that turn pale as death, and shake with affright, when earthquakes rock the globe, when volcanoes burst its bars assunder, when lightnings blaze, and thunders crash, and howling tempests sweep all before them,—will ye not prepare in this your day of gracious visitation, to meet your God and Judge, when he shall rise and shake terribly the earth, wake up all the slumbering nations and generations of the dead, call all the dwellers of earth, with all apostate angels, to stand at his awful bar and pass review beneath his all-seeing eye, and shall render to every man according to the works done in the body? Behold, *now* is the day of salvation! Behold, *this* is the accepted time! *to-day!* if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man."

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 3. Vol. XVI.) MARCH, 1842. (Whole No. 183.

SERMON CCCXIX.

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FILIAL DUTY.

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."—Exodus xx. 12.

The fifth commandment is remarkable as being the first, and indeed the only one, to which a promise is annexed. In this circumstance, we recognize the wisdom and goodness of the great lawgiver. Addressed as it is principally to youth, God seems to have taken into view the influence of motives upon their young hearts. He appeals to them not only on the ground of his high and indisputable authority; but lays before them a strong inducement to compliance, viz. the anticipation of a long and happy life. The love of life, so natural to the young, is here made subservient to the discharge of relative duty; and under the old dispensation—a dispensation characterized principally by temporal rewards—we have reason to believe that scrupulous obedience was followed by an ample earthly recompense.

Throughout the holy scriptures, great stress is laid on the importance of filial duty, and the heaviest punishments are threatened in case of noncompliance. God has guarded the parental authority, with a sort of jealous particularity. He seems to consider rebellion towards an earthly father as the germ of treason towards himself. He would have the young heart trained to obedience; inasmuch as the same principles which operate to overturn the family government, are indicative of revolt against God; and may in the end bring ruin upon the refractory individual, both for time and eternity. Hence he has issued his edict in terms the most solemn, and demanded of all, who stand in the relation comprehended, that they should honor their father and their mother.

This command includes two things, *respect* and *obedience*.

1. The first of these topics will now come under consideration; and I hope, whilst commenting upon it, to have the serious attention of the younger members of this congregation.

It can scarcely be expected, that I shall enter fully into the various and almost countless particulars to which this command applies. It has intimate bearings on the conduct of every hour which is passed under the parental roof, and extends occasionally even to the period when youth is merged into manhood, and when graver duties and more mature affections have superseded our earlier attachments. If there has been exercised towards us the ordinary kindness and attention of parental love, it is a dictate of nature, that with the increase of our parents' years, we should entertain for them an increasing respect; and when their venerable forms shall have sunk into the grave, and we can see them here no more, we shall then, more than ever, appreciate their worth. But it is only whilst they are living, and principally whilst we are with them and under their control, that this command can be fulfilled. It is *then* for us to recompense, in some degree, by our profound respect, and prompt obedience, and tender assiduities, the numberless self denials and cares to which, for our sakes, they have so cheerfully submitted. All the tears which we may pour upon their graves will not atone for past ingratitude and coldness. Not *there*, can they feel the reactings of affection which they longed to see, and for want of which perhaps their grey hairs were brought down the more speedily with sorrow to the grave.

2. Filial respect is expressive of both *feeling* and *conduct*. We must entertain towards our parents those feelings of reverence and regard which their age and relative station demand. These, independent of their personal character, should secure the homage of the child. It is to be be regretted, that in some instances traits of moral excellence calculated to command respect, are wanting; and that we are hence obliged to base this filial duty on the naked command of God; for even where such traits *are* wanting, the obligation of this part of the divine law is by no means canceled. It is to be supposed, that filial affection is so strong as to overlook what others might be disposed to censure; and that whatever blemishes exist in a parent's character, affectionate regard for the child still maintains its hold. I am aware that some of the grosser vices may so get the dominion as to disrobe a parent of every thing calculated to elicit affection or to enforce authority. He becomes sometimes, by the indulgence of abominable lusts, cold and alienated towards those who were once dear to him. But even then, the recollection of what he once was, should serve to apologize, in the view of the children, for faults which others may justly reprobate. The sacred name of *father* is as a mantle of charity, which, imitating the virtuous sons of an ancient patriarch, the child, with averted face, should cast over a parent's faults. But these are extreme cases, and whether it is possible to respect such, or how far the command in such cases applies, is not easy to determine.

The obligation of filial respect imposed by this command had in view, no doubt, the ordinary range of parental character. In general, it is such as claims respect not merely on the ground of divine authority, but also from personal characteristics.

Providence has signified his approbation of the marriage relation in many particulars. One is, the improvement of character, which in most cases is visible when an individual enters into this relation. The dissolute are often seen to become regular, and the reckless considerate. Self respect begins to take the place of levity and vulgarity. The volatile spirit which fed on empty flatteries, settles down into the sober matron; and the responsibilites of her new station gives to the mother a force of character to which she was before a stranger. To these improved traits, there is added parental affection, whose operation is to call forth what is good and to restrain what is bad in the human character. This affection is not indeed holiness; but there is something in it, I had almost said, akin to it. It exerts over our rough and rebellious nature a more soothing and refining influence than any feeling or principle save that of religion. It strikes a blow at the deep rooted selfishness of the heart, and makes it both our interest and our inclination to advance the general good. Who can look at all this and not admit that a divine providence has given its sanction to the marriage relation? But I adduce the improvement growing out of this relation, to show that the ordinary range of parental character is such as to command the respect of the dependent child.

3. As an inducement to filial respect, there is also the *superior age of the parent.*

God has implanted within us a disposition to reverence what is old. The venerable oak claims more of this feeling than the ambitious sapling which shoots up at its roots. The grey towers of antiquity are more impressive than the fantastic structures of modern times. We should feel grateful for this instinctive reverence for antiquity, inasmuch as it contributes to the stability of social order, and serves to counteract that pride and self sufficiency so natural to man. By these remarks, I may be thought wanting in the spirit of the times; but I cannot do violence to nature, by doing homage to an age of innovation, if not of radicalism. I am not one of those who believe that a thing is of course superior because it is new; and I very much fear that a morbid appetite for novelties is tending rapidly to undermine some of the principles which God has laid at the base of our social and domestic happiness. The feeling which treats scornfully what is ancient, is the same which is likely to dispute or to disregard parental authority. It is a feeling of self sufficiency akin to that state of mind which hesitates to admit its dependence even on God himself. I am for teaching children to respect what is old; because it is, in general, conducive to their moral improvement; and is a guarantee for their future stability of character. So important was deemed this reverence for age on the part of the young, that Jehovah made it a matter of divine legislation. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and

honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God, I am the Lord." And in Deutoronomy, predicting the incursion of a fierce pagan enemy, he characterizes them as "a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old."

4. Again, age generally brings along with it experience and knowledge, which are a ground of respect.

By this remark, I do not intend to assert, that in native intellect or acquired knowledge, a parent is of course superior to his child. But whosoever, with habits of observation, has lived longer than another, must have acquired a greater amount of practical wisdom. In this respect, the parent is generally, if not always, superior to the child. Humble as may be his condition in life, he has had, amid the vicissitudes of earth, that opportunity to study mankind which enables him to impart many a salutary lesson to his offspring. And this species of instruction, let me say, is the best of all kinds; far, very far superior to that which is learned merely from books. For, as a christian poet very justly observes:

> "Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
> Have oft times no connection.
> Knowledge dwells in heads replete
> With thoughts of *other* men—*wisdom*
> In minds attentive to their *own*."

It sometimes happens, that when a youth is elevated by circumstances somewhat above his parent—as where more ample opportunities for education have supplied him with acquired terms or ideas which the parent has not, he undervalues his sire at the same time that he overestimates himself. Any disrespect from a child on such grounds argues a great defect of character, and must expose the delinquent to the certain displeasure of heaven. I solemnly warn every young person, on the authority of God himself, to honor his parents, whatever be their grade of intellect, or however circumscribed may have been their opportunities for improvement. Know also, that in ability to furnish lessons of practical wisdom, they are generally our superiors even to their dying day. The advice which they may feel it their duty to impart is grounded on their knowledge of the evils of life. It is administered in affection. It is our real good which impels them to give it; and never should it be received with any other feeling than that of profound respect. When the opinions of other men are given, we are never sure that they are free from an admixture of selfishness; but when the *parent* counsels, it is as if he spoke to his *own* soul. Surely then, every child, in matters of practical wisdom, should, from respect to the parent, seek *his* counsel before that of any other person. Children are very apt to err on this point. They violate God's holy command by treating with levity the good advice of their sires. With an overweening opinion of themselves, they assume to know quite as much and sometimes even more than their father or their mother. Because, from what are considered modern improvements in

education, they may have got a smattering of knowledge above what was taught in former days, they take the liberty, on such grounds, to treat as old fashioned and exploded the opinions of their fathers. Especially when sound principle and practical morality are, from the tenderest of motives, inculcated, does the prurient depravity of youth neutralize the wholesome lesson, by the false imputation of a selfish incapacity for enjoyment on the part of the counselor. The old man, say they, having lost his susceptibility to enjoyments of a sensual kind, has of course parted with his relish for them; and how, under such circumstances, can advice come with weight upon us? Many is the reckless youth who has thus reasoned; and who consequently has not only inflicted a deep wound on the parental heart, but has prepared the way for his own physical and moral ruin. Let all, then, who are thus disposed to trample on venerable authority and influence, remember that they are at the same time treading under foot God's holy law. Let them beware, lest for such filial impiety, God take them away with a stroke. The opinions no less than the persons of their ancestors are to be respected.

5. Again. The efforts which are made by parents to render their children happy, and to improve their outward condition, is a reason why they should ever stand high in the respect and veneration of the latter.

The principle or feeling is instinctive, I admit, which leads the parent to take care of his offspring. I concede, also, that in the very act of cherishing the child, there is an attendant reward. The God of nature has implanted deep in the heart an inextinguishable love of offspring. Our children are but an expansion of ourselves. We seem to multiply our own natures in their existence, and to convey down through posterity a sort of personal immortality. Under the influence of these feelings, what endurance of toil and self denial will the parent encounter to sustain the being, and foster the interests of his child! But is this any reason why that child should deny the obligations of a reciprocal respect and esteem? Indeed, I believe that every truly affectionate son or daughter does contemplate with no ordinary emotions, the trials and the toils of parental love, which were so generously endured for their happiness. The little helpless creature is thrown first on the mother's care. And none but a mother can administer properly to a being so frail and so dependent. She *only* is endowed with the necessary qualifications. It is her deep love alone that can be tasked to supply the vigilance, and the cares, and the assiduities requisite to keep so feeble a flame from extinguishment. No other than a mother's love could hold out amid the discouragements and toils of infantile life; nor could any other principle endure that perpetual draught upon the patience, which the fickleness and the feverish fretfulness of childhood call for. A mother's love! What will it not endure or dare to promote the child's safety and happiness! How often, by the light of the sickly taper, does it converse with the midnight hour of suffering! What tears

wring from the heart's agony does it let fall on the fevered brow, whilst the prayer for relief is breathed unto God on every sigh! But memory cannot retain these early exhibitions of maternal care. They were made at a period too remote for its retrospective powers. Still knowing that such must have been the labors and anxieties of a mother's love, should we not ever honor one who endured so much for us, and at a period when we could do nothing for ourselves? Cold and callous must be that heart which feels not the warm gush of filial tenderness, as it recurs to the scenes of childhood, and traces the thousand kind offices of maternal affection. Who, even without experiencing the same early bereavement, cannot sympathize with the amiable Cowper, standing before his mother's portrait and giving vent, in touching numbers, to his soul's deep emotion? —

"My mother! When I learned that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch, even then life's journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unfelt, a kiss;
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss.
Ah, that maternal smile! It answers—Yes.
I heard the bell toll'd on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away.
And turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But, was it such? It was. Where thou art gone,
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more!"

As we advanced from infancy to youth, how many hours, subtracted from personal ease, have been devoted to our good! To supply our temporal wants, has cost no small sacrifice. The anxiety expended on this point alone, may have caused the tear to flow and the heart often to ache. We have not heeded when or where the means of support and comfort were to be obtained. Blithe as the lark, we have hailed each rising day, and sported away its sunny hours, as if the world was made for us alone; whilst the fond parent may have been weeping away the lonely hours of the previous night under the thought of actual or anticipated poverty. What is it that nerves the arm of the laborer, and holds him up day after day, amid heat and cold, until he drops exhausted into the grave? Is it not the thoughts of home, and the affectionate yearnings over his numerous offspring? And shall all this be met or followed by filial ingratitude or disrespect?

The parent toils in order not only to supply the temporal necessities of his child, but to raise him to a respectable standing in the community. The child's honor is his; and he is anxious to advance him in the esteem of all who know him. With this view, how many affectionate counsels are given! how much of his hard earnings are

ended! He will deny himself often the comforts of life, if he
r thereby impart respectability to his child. All the recompense
ch he asks or expects, is the success of his efforts, and the recip-
al esteem of his offspring. And is this too much to ask? Is it
much to give in return for all that is bestowed? That heart
ch, on this point, does not feel, must be dead to every generous
otion; and if the ability is given to soothe the last hours of paren-
existence, and it fail to do so, the curse of God must follow so
eant a child, if not in this world, assuredly in that which is to
ne.

Filial respect is a lovely attribute of youthful virtue. It is said of
of the ancient kings of England, that having lost, in quick suc-
sion, his father and his son, he manifested a far more inconsolable
e of feeling at the former event than the latter. Astonishment
s expressed at this by some of his courtiers. "What, sire, weep
re at the death of thy aged father than at that of the heir of thy
gdom!" "Ah!" replied the king, "God can give me another
; but even *he* cannot give me another father."

3. Inward respect for parents should be accompanied with the cor-
onding external signs of reverence.

The scriptures *enjoin* such tokens of regard. They command that
young shall rise up in the presence of the hoary head. It cannot
hat children truly honor their parents, who do not in their deport-
nt treat them with becoming respect.

Their address should be reverential. It may be affectionate, occa-
sally even familiar; but it should never savor of levity. Never
uld it be the address of an equal. It should always have, in its
e and terms, that which bespeaks a respectful regard. Even the
ulancy of age should be soothed by kind words, and the garrulity
second childhood should never be allowed to provoke an impatient
scornful reply.

n the presence of others the child should always treat his parent
h becoming reverence. Any departure from this rule, I regard as
iolation of the fifth commandment.

The parent should always have precedence, in any situation where
hoice is to be made. This is especially applicable to the period
minority. The first station in the family uniformly belongs to the
ent, as also the first share in any enjoyment, whether of taste or
ntellect. I have sometimes known this order reversed. I have
n a sort of filial usurpation, in which the parental rights have
n trampled upon, and the sceptre of authority virtually wrested
n the legitimate hand. Selfishness in the child will sometimes
inguish all sense of propriety; and personal gratification will be
ght, though it involve an indecent disregard to filial obligations.
ot the *parent* sometimes to blame for this? Does not an inordi-
e affection invite this display of selfishness? Is not the child
metimes trained to consider his parent as a sort of slave, to minister
his personal pleasure? If such *be* the case, there may come a

retribution for this over indulgence, in the cold hearted selfishness, which mocks at a parent's woes, and coolly disregards the claims of honor and respect, which both the law of nature and of God enjoin.

The first station in the family, I repeat, uniformly belongs to the parent. Every attempt, on the part of the child, at invading this prerogative, by setting himself forward when he should retire—by offering his opinion when he should keep silence—by interruption, or by contradiction—in tones of voice, or by expression of countenance—every such way of manifesting filial disrespect, is a breach of God's high and holy command. Never should the child forget the sacred precept, "Honor thy father and thy mother." He should "bind it about his neck, and write it on the tablets of his heart." It should give a character to all his intercourse and manners in the family circle; and believe me, my young friends, in no light in which you can be placed, will you appear more lovely than in rendering to your parents the honor which God claims for them, and which is justly their due.

These remarks are made under a conviction of their importance, and in view of a supposed deficiency in filial respect of the youth of our common country.

The institutions of the old world, political and social, are favorable to the parental authority, and have a tendency to restrain the premature development of youthful independence. Children, from the very nature of the case, are taught to venerate what is old—to keep in check their passions—to defer to authority—to await the appropriate time for the display of their fancied or real attainments. Established usages, and the gradations of social life, all have this restraining tendency. I shall not stop to inquire in how many important respects we have the advantage over the citizens of a more restricted government. I introduce the above statement simply to show the influence on filial respect which a certain social state may exert, compared with our own institutions, founded on the principles of liberty, but not on that very account, perhaps, quite so conducive to a reverence for age, and to the restraints of authority. *Independence* is a word which exerts a magical influence on every class of our citizens. It is interwoven with our national history, and is the watchword under all circumstances of public peril. Is it to be wondered at, then, that the youth of our country should early imbibe a dislike to all kinds of restraint,—even to that which both God and nature have imposed? And is it not true, that in this country, more than any other of equal standing, the young are prematurely released from the watchful care and wholesome authority of the parent? If these suggestions are well founded, then is there a need of great vigilance on the part of parents, in order to counteract a tendency in our social and civil condition, unfavorable to domestic government. The child, too, should remember that he may gain his liberty too soon for his own good. The price of this premature indepen-

dence may be, not simply the sighs and sorrows of a parent's heart, but the disappointment of his own expectations, and the ultimate ruin of his own soul. He may have the satisfaction of anticipating, by a few years, his release from parental restraint; but like the unfledged bird which has ventured too soon from the warm nest, and finding its wings incompetent for a self sustained flight, sinks neglected on the ground, or dies beneath the peltings of the storm; so he may ere long bitterly repent of his presumption, and sigh for a return to privileges which, through his own folly, he has forever forfeited.

Never can a youth hope to prosper, who has wilfully cast contempt on a parent's authority, or treated with disrespect his person. If the opposite course be so important as to call for a special mandate from God, and so lovely as to warrant the annexation of a promise of temporal good, can the ungrateful or disrespectful child expect the favoring providence of God? or rather must he not meet with a retribution even in this world? For the love which your parents have felt for you, my young friends, for the self denial which they have practised for your good, all they ask or expect is, that you act worthy of them, and return them your respect and esteem. Repay them you never can. But by filial fondness, and a proper respect, you may soothe their declining years; and this you are bound to do. God expects and requires this at your hand. You cannot do otherwise and be guiltless.

But if you owe so much to an *earthly* parent, how much do you owe to God? If you are bound to respect the authority of the former, in what light should you view the high commands of Jehovah? *He* imparts on a great and liberal scale. Have you ever thought of your obligations to *him?* What returns have you made for all his kindness? In the name of your *Heavenly Father*, I press these high and holy claims upon you. Tell me, have you ever seriously considered them? If God threaten you for disobedience to an earthly parent, will he not vindicate his own honor? Has he nourished and brought you up as children, and have you rebelled against him? Come, then, this day, take with you words of contrition, and return unto the Lord. Repent of your cold ungrateful conduct. Seek the intercession of Jesus, who alone can effect a reconciliation, and as obedient children, bow, without delay, to the commands of Jehovah.

SERMON CCCXX.

By Rev. J. B. WATERBURY, D. D.

FILIAL DUTY.

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."—Exodus xx. 12.

In the foregoing discourse, I observed, that the duties enjoined in the fifth commandment relate to two points, viz: *respect* and *obedience*. The first of these having been considered, we have to notice the obligations of filial obedience embraced in the second topic.

It has been very justly remarked, by a distinguished writer, that "the word *honor*, by which this duty is here enjoined, is chosen with supreme felicity, as being sufficiently comprehensive and sufficiently definite to express, with as much exactness as can easily be compassed, all the several branches of duty which parents can equitably demand of their children."

The nature, obligations, and rewards of filial obedience, will very naturally constitute the principal features of a discourse purporting to explain and enforce this precept of the divine law. But it must be perceived how utterly impossible it is for the preacher fully to illustrate in one or two sermons, a theme so extensive and important. Something, however, on each of the topics just named, may be said; and it is hoped that these hints, by awakening attention to the subject, may lead to a more full investigation of its claims. To say that it is one of unspeakable importance, after God has given it a place in his laws, seems a useless truism, and savors of positive irreverence. By placing it there, in the very centre of that immutable code, stereotyped on stone with his own hand amid the flames of Mount Sinai, God has given us *his* impressions of its importance.

It remains for us to inquire, by all the lights which we can obtain, what is the nature and the extent of the obligation. This every *parent* is bound to do, that he may know how to command and to govern his house—that he may enjoin nothing which it may be lawful for the child to refuse; and thus become a domestic tyrant, rather than an intelligent guardian. For the want of this discrimination, a parent, by driving the child into legitimate resistance, may lose that control which both reason and religion, under different circumstances, would have conceded. This inquiry into the nature of the fifth commandment, the child, also, is bound to make, that he may understand where the source of filial obligation lies, and what are the limits to which it extends.

If these points be not examined and settled, it is not difficult to see that family government cannot be properly maintained. If the parent have no fixed principles understood and recognized by the child, the latter cannot ascertain when he is rendering, or when refusing obedience. In such a case his relative position towards his parent, is like that of a slave towards a despot, trembling with perpetual apprehension. Caprice, in this instance, takes the place of law; and punishment is awarded or withheld, not on the principle of desert, but according to parental humor. How certainly destructive is such a course of all order and government in a family! and when family government is undermined, the effect on social security and civil rule, is like tearing away the corner stone of an edifice, or poisoning the head waters of a pure refreshing stream.

The obedience required in the text is positive and negative; that is, the doing of what is enjoined, and abstaining from that which is forbidden.

It so happens, under the divine constitution, that, with respect to the training of children, nature lends her assistance in the enforcement of a divine precept. The child is thrown entirely on the care of its parents. It is at first a very helpless thing, and requires their watchful assiduities in order to keep alive the vital spark. The first conscious feeling of obligation must be when it is very young. This feeling respects those who are its natural guardians, and whose gentle and affectionate looks have won for them a place in its young heart, as yet unoccupied by any rival attachment. Thus the force of natural affection comes in to strengthen the weight of parental authority; and it is an auxiliary, powerful in proportion to the manner in which it is used. It may become to principle an antagonist or an ally. It may act on the parent's weakness to lead him into indulgences most injurious; or influence him to withhold that discipline which the law of God enjoins; but on the other hand, it may be used as a powerful lever to filial respect and obedience, and this, no doubt, was one benevolent end which the Creator had in view in implanting it.

But, besides this, the physical weakness of children compared with maturity, and their entire dependence, are circumstances which illus-

trate a divine wisdom, in making nature an auxiliary in enforcing a divine command. If the physical frame were as strong as the passions are turbulent, how could the parent hold the reins? Or if the child could take care of itself—if it felt or feared none of the consequences of abandonment, parental government would be equally impracticable. But how admirably has God adjusted all these circumstances to afford, on the one hand, every possible facility to the parent to perform *his* part in controlling youthful depravity; and on the other, giving to the child, thus early, a sense of its weakness and dependence, that it may learn to fear as well as love the hand that fosters it.

This obedience on the part of the child, should begin at a very early age. On this point, more responsibility attaches to the parent than to his offspring. The will of the latter is operative much sooner than we have been wont to imagine. When it is placed in opposition to the will of the parent—indicated often rather by signs than by words—it is necessary to give some signal of disapprobation. The child should be made to feel that its animal instincts are not always to be gratified; and when the passions rise to give impulse to the will, it is still more important to teach the little rebel submission to a higher power. Neglect this at the outset, and many a pang must penetrate the parent's heart, as a just retribution for allowing the affections to triumph over principle. Children thus indulged are not likely, in subsequent life, to "honor their father and their mother."

On this subject we are obliged to presuppose that what is enjoined by the parent is what the child ought to do. We must take it for granted that affection for his children is such as to be a pledge for the propriety of his commands. I am aware that many exceptions might be urged, in which even the natural instinct of parental love seems to have been extinguished amid the turbulence of low and groveling passions. But these exceptions ought not to have much weight when a great moral principle is to be settled. It would be better for a few, in such cases, to suffer by compliance, than for the principle of filial obedience to be in the least degree weakened.

We may, then, lay down the principle, *that whatsoever is commanded by the parent—plainly not against the laws of God nor the decencies of life—the child is bound to do.*

Nothing short of this, we think, can be recognized as compliance with that sacred command, which we have chosen for the text. In the government of a family, the parent is the executive head. *He,* and not the child, is to decide what should be done. He is a prince over his own little domain; and whilst he is bound to order his government according to the laws of God, he is or ought to be, with such restriction, an absolute monarch. Let him recognize God's word as his guide, and there is no fear that, in his paternal administration, he will become too rigid on the one hand, or too reckless and indulgent on the other.

The commands which are issued from day to day, in a family, respect a thousand little items which it were impossible to mention in detail. They are given out to meet the ever varying incidents of domestic life, or shape themselves according to the character and conduct of the child. Specification is not important. The great point at which we aim, is to settle the principle of obedience, and to mark, according to heaven's law, its limitations. In *all things* which are commanded, the child *must* obey. He may not make an exception, unless, as has been observed, he can show that the *parental* conflicts with the *divine* command. A child will often think a parent misjudges—or he may be disposed to consider the requirement as hard and even cruel. He will deem the thing impracticable, even before trial; and wonder that he can be called upon to do a thing so much beyond his ability. But such views and feelings are traceable, in most instances, to a selfish ungovernable temper; and if they are allowed to break the force of parental authority, or worse, lead the child to disregard it, they will overturn all family government, and drive every vestige of peace and order from the domestic circle. Reasonable requirements from the parent, and implicit obedience on the part of the child, is the only safe, as it is the only scriptural rule.

The obedience which the child is required to render, is not only *implicit*, but *prompt*.

When the parent issues his command, whether it respect what is to be done, or what is to be avoided, the child should instantly comply. There is a proneness in children, even where positive disobedience is not intended, to put a parent's patience to the test, by withholding compliance as long as possible—a sort of dilatoriness, which argues almost as much criminal disrespect, as if the command were deliberately disregarded. In some cases this may be owing to heedlessness, but in more, it is the fruit of obstinacy and selfishness. Certainly there is, in such cases, a manifest want of principle. That respectful regard for the parental authority, which the text enjoins, cannot be felt; and the obedience which is so slowly and reluctantly rendered, seems the offspring of fear, and not the generous and spontaneous impulse of affection.

Now, who cannot see that prompt obedience is the only obedience which meets the spirit of the text, as well as the only kind which gratifies a parent's heart? Is it honoring the father or the mother, if obedience is rendered only when, through fear, it can no longer be withheld? or not until the young and selfish heart has first accomplished its own plans, and gratified its own desires? A child will often think this a point of but small consequence, and will consider compliance, however tardy, as fully exonerating it from the charge of disobedience. He must, in the first place, finish what he has begun, or step aside to enjoy some intermediate pleasure, or idly linger without any positive cause of delay. Now this should not be. The parent should *expect*, and should *have* prompt obedience. *He*

should feel it to be as much his duty to expect it, as it is the duty of the child to render it. No matter what may be the circumstances of the child, compatible with compliance, nor how interesting to him may be his juvenile plans and pleasures, they should be at once relinquished, and the parental voice responded to with the least possible delay. Aside from the abstract principle of duty, the importance of such promptitude to the character of the child cannot well be conceived. I can perceive, I think, its favorable bearings even on his prospects for eternity. Instantaneous compliance is the implied and asserted duty in all the commands of the law and the gospel. It is the dilatory, the procrastinating spirit, which destroys men's souls; a spirit, if not fostered in the nursery, at least not there sufficiently rebuked.

1. The obedience required must be *cheerful*. It will be so, where there is felt the union of filial respect and love. Then no command seems hard, nor any prohibition unreasonable. But how often is it the case, where obedience is rendered, there is such evident displeasure in the manner, so many marks of dissatisfaction, that the virtue of compliance is wholly neutralized? It is, in such cases, a servile, and not a filial obedience. It is *obeying*, but not *honoring* the parent, and is, therefore, a violation of this holy command. How painful to the fond heart of the parent is that sullen compliance, which seems to say, "I obey because I must. Power and authority, not love and respect, impel me. Were I sure of impunity in disobedience, I should consult my own wishes and inclinations."

On the other hand, there are few things in this world more lovely, or of better report, than a cheerful acquiescence by affectionate children in the commands and wishes of a parent. It is one of the finest moral pictures which can be presented. It argues great excellence of character in the head, and unusual amiability in the members of the family. The selfish nature must, under such circumstances, have been, at least, strongly controlled; whilst the more uncommon traits of kindness and benevolence must have been assiduously cultivated. Among such children, I should expect to find the candidates for earth's purest pleasures, and for heaven's bright rewards. Here, I should say, is a nursery for those influences which, under God, are to act powerfully in improving the age, and in renovating the world. Our future men of renown, who are to fill our pulpits—to adorn our civil offices—who are to prove the guardians of liberty—the advocates of truth, and the defenders of innocence—who are to lead on the van of that heaven selected corps, whose honor it shall be to spread over our fallen race the lights of science, of civilization, and of religion; all these are to receive, in such well governed families, their early impulses and inspirations.

"No man," says a pious author, "is able to govern, who has not himself learned to obey;" and I would add, that a disobedient, refractory child is as likely to resist the civil authority, when administered by others, as he is to abuse it, when unhappily it is committed to his own hands.

I have little doubt, that if the personal history of two thirds of the inmates of our penitentiaries were examined, it would appear that the incipient steps to this climax of infamy were taken in the nursery or at the fireside. It was at *home*, that the young rebel first spurned with impunity, the wholesome restraint; and thence emboldened by success, he moved on to more daring deeds of depravity, until the outraged law inflicted upon him its merited retribution.

Let the child learn to obey at *home*—let this obedience be prompt and cheerful, and the habit of subordination is fixed forever. In every situation, then, in which the vicissitudes of earth may place him, you will find him the advocate of order; whilst he will exemplify its beauty in his own ready and uniform compliance.

These principles are highly important, in a country like ours, and at a time when the power of excitement and the tendency to revolution are heaving like an earthquake under the foundations of social order. In such a state of things, even parental authority, it is to be feared, may share in the general wreck.

There is a premature manhood, and a premature womanhood, which affect the wisdom of age, with the inexperience of infancy—which seem anxious to get rid of parental restraint, and launch forth on the stormy element, reckless of the danger, and unprovided with a compass to guide, or an anchor to cast, amid the perilous scene. Our only security in the case is in family religion, and in family government, based on the principles of religion.

2. The obedience enjoined in the text is an UNRESERVED obedience.

What the parent requires, and *all* that he requires, should be done. The child will often make exceptions and distinctions, with a view to gratify himself in part whilst rendering but a partial obedience. There is a sort of half way compliance—a mere apology for obedience, which is by no means a fulfilling of the law. A task is prescribed; it may be the work of the hands or of the intellect. The child not loving the work, or too fond of play to bestow upon it the requisite time and attention, passes over it in a careless and hurried manner, and thus betrays a spirit of selfish insubordination almost as criminal as actual refusal. He who performs not that task to the best of his ability—whether it be the acquiring of useful knowledge, or the employment of the muscles, is not rendering the obedience which God requires. The great lawgiver expects that the obedience, as in that which is rendered directly to himself, will be unreserved; that it will not be fitful, nor the effect of caprice; nor that when the duty required is difficult it may be slighted, and when easy it shall be fulfilled. All this is in direct opposition to the spirit of his holy command. It is not honoring but dishonoring the parent; and so far is such obedience from any claim to the promise annexed to the text, it will subject the unfaithful child to the divine displeasure.

3. The fifth commandment requires that the obedience of the child should be as scrupulously rendered in the *absence* as in the *presence* of the parent.

It is not possible for the parental eye always to be upon the child. The most of his conduct may be away from such supervision. The expectation is that filial obligation will press as strongly in solitude or among companions, as it does when the voice and eye of the parent are upon him. To take advantage of the absence of a father or mother in order to throw off restraint and tread a forbidden path, argues a great amount of juvenile depravity. If a comparison were instituted between filial disrespect in these circumstances, and that which an open and barefaced rebellion against parental authority would exhibit, we should say, that there was as much of moral turpitude in the former as in the latter case, and certainly more moral meanness. Yet how common is it for children to think, that when the parent is not present to command or to threaten, they may disregard the counsels and violate the principles which have been so often enjoined! Temptations also are strong from the influence of companionship and the example of the less scrupulous. A child is very apt, when surrounded by associates, and borne away with juvenile excitement, to forget those admonitions which parental love and faithfulness have instilled. How deeply reprehensible is such conduct in the light of that holy precept which says, "honor thy father and thy mother!" Could a greater dishonor be put upon parental authority, than practically to despise it because, under the circumstances, it cannot be enforced? Is there not an eye which is never withdrawn from the heart and the conduct—the steady gaze of omniscience—which marks the defect of principle in the young heart, and notices every aberration of moral conduct? If the parent be not there to chide; if his voice of authority cannot be heard; is not God there? and speaks not conscience some poignant rebukes? The divine law is as obligatory in solitude and among boon companions, as when the subject of it is seated at the fireside, or takes his place at the paternal board. No matter how far distant from home the child may be, he should scrupulously obey God's holy commandment, requiring him under all circumstances to honor his parents. The code of domestic morals should be engraven on his heart, and no temptations or solicitations, no threats or jibes, should be allowed to compel him into its violation.

Finally: The obedience which we are considering, requires that the child conscientiously do what the parent or guardian is known to approve, even where no express command or prohibition has been given.

In the constant change of circumstances, and in the occurrence of incidents modifying filial duty, it is not possible that a parent can have a rule which shall invariably apply, or issue a command in time to meet every exigency. And here lies the great test of filial respect and obedience. There is a domestic morality which is soon understood by the child; and this, together with his own sense of what is right and proper, will enable him to judge and decide in all such cases. The parent or guardian has not given an express command—the circumstance is new—the temptation perhaps presses the child to do wrong. Now, if that child shall say, "My father or mother has not forbidden

this very thing. If they had, I would not think of doing it. I may for this once indulge." When a child argues thus in favor of the tempter's schemes, knowing at the same time how mournfully a knowledge of the act must strike on his parent's heart, that child has not within it the principle of filial obedience. God looks down upon him with stern disapprobation, for violating that holy precept, "honor thy father and thy mother."

But, on the other hand, if the child say: "Well, though my parent has not given, for this particular act, an express command, still I know it will be displeasing to him. Shall I then, for a momentary gratification, incur his displeasure and wound his heart? I will not do it. The fear of God and respect for a parent's feelings shall in this instance govern me." Here is a beautiful exemplification of the very spirit of filial respect and obedience. This is compliance with the command in question; and he who exhibits such a temper is, I might almost venture to predict, not far from the kingdom of heaven.

The respect and obedience which is thus enforced by a divine precept, is obligatory principally during a state of minority. But if *then* it be rendered, it will assuredly modify the conduct of subsequent years. When the lapse of time shall have changed the relative position of the parties, and they who were children have become men and women, there is little room to fear that a venerable parent will be neglected or forgotten. Time may have abated the sensible emotion; or, as Providence would have it, new relations may have called forth new and stronger affections; but what is taken from the *force* of the current is added to its depth; and filial respect is never more cordially rendered than after the obligations of filial obedience have ceased.

What a lovely picture does Virgil present to us in his description of the sacking of Troy! His hero proposes to abandon the city now wrapt in flames and ready to fall and bury its remaining inhabitants beneath its ruins. But his venerated sire is incapable of flight. Age has intimidated his heart and weakened his limbs; nor is it easy to persuade him that a life so nearly wasted is worth the effort to preserve it. But Eneas will not stir from the spot until his father consents to accompany him. Filial affection overpowers all his fears. The old man is, at last, prevailed upon to resign himself to the conduct of his son, who, receiving him upon his shoulders, with the boy on one hand, and the wife following close in the rear, he treads the fiery avenues until he reaches the place of safety. This touching scene is from the pen of a heathen, but is worthy the inspiration of a christian poet.

Respect for the aged is a criterion of character. He who has it not, lacks an essential element of social happiness; and he who proceeds to positive acts of contempt or neglect—especially where strong filial obligations exist—must expect to incur the vengeance of heaven and the indignation of a virtuous community.

"Honor thy father and thy mother," is a precept, as much in accordance with the dictates of nature as it is with a sentiment of reli-

gion. Hence the reward of compliance has a respect to the reception of good in this life. Can any doubt that such good *will* be awarded? That sense of right which always attends a course of virtuous action is of itself reward enough. Has not many a child felt it, when in a spirit of prompt and cheerful obedience, it has met the wishes of an affectionate parent? See in the sweet smile of conscious happiness, that gilds its young face, and which is reflected by an answering smile from the gratified parent, how certainly virtue is its own reward. How unlike the sullen selfish cloud that darkens the face of disobedience, and makes the heart sad and heavy for hours! Is the known pleasure of the parent no recompense? Is there nothing in the approving eye, or the fond kiss, to repay the affectionate regards?

There is a reward also in the approbation of the good. Filial respect and obedience have always elicited admiration. The opposite course has invariably branded its perpetrator with infamy. Can the young heart be insensible to this universal sentiment? A scrupulous regard to the obligation of the fifth commandment, is not only in itself a lovely exhibition of juvenile character, but is accepted as a recommendation of no ordinary value, by those who are seeking alliances of a business or domestic kind. It is on the youth whose *home* virtues are strongly developed, that the sagacious eye of the public fixes, as the candidate for the honors and felicities even of this world; and no young person can more effectually foreclose all prospect of success in the pursuits of honorable distinction, than by trampling on parental authority, or treating with disrespect the authors of his existence. On this subject, there is even in this life both a reward and a retribution.

4. But finally, God has said to those who comply with this command, "Thy days shall be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Here is a promise of temporal life not less emphatic than the promises of a life to come. It may have respected originally that peculiar people, the Jews, and have looked to the practice of the domestic virtues when settled in that goodly land to which they were traveling. But is there any thing in the circumstances of that ancient nation which authorizes us to confine the obligation to them? And if the command apply to us and to all, as without doubt it does—shall not the reward annexed to compliance, be in some sense of equally extensive application? That it will assuredly and in every case be bestowed, we may not be at liberty to assert; but we may say, that he who fulfils the obligation, has a right unpresumptuously to expect the reward. This is not leaving faith and going over to the doctrine of works. I am speaking, it must be remembered, of *temporal* rewards. But suppose the individual complying, find an early grave. In that case, though his days may not be long in point of time, they may be in point of practical wisdom. They may be also as to the amount of felicity enjoyed. And, long or short, when they shall have been numbered, it will at least be no matter of regret, in the closing scene, to have practised the filial virtues; whilst on the other hand,

a consciousness of unfaithfulness towards a beloved parent, must plant an additional thorn in the dying pillow.

How signally has Almighty God set the mark of his displeasure on filial disobedience! The elder sons of Jacob treated their venerable sire in a manner calculated to bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Was not this act of filial perfidy sorely punished? The sons of Eli too; mark their conduct and their end! A rebellious Absalom soon met the fate which his unnatural crimes had merited. Are these the only instances of heaven's just retribution for filial impiety? By no means. Could the history of thousands who have died in dishonor or by violence be revealed, it would show, I have no doubt, a relation between their filial unfaithfulness and their wretched end. On the other hand, how close is the connection between the practice of the domestic virtues and a life of honor and of felicity.

On this point also, the scriptures are not deficient in impressive illustration.

In what an attractive light do they present the character and conduct of Joseph? In him, the virtues of filial respect and affection were early developed, and remained in full force amid the vicissitudes of his eventful life. They beat warmly in his bosom throughout his long exile; nor could the extremes of human suffering and grandeur extinguish them. One of the first inquiries on revealing himself to his brethren was, "Doth my father yet live?" Upon ascertaining the fact, he exclaims, "Haste ye and go up to my father and say unto him, thus saith thy son Joseph; God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not, and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, and there will I nourish thee. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither." When the aged patriarch drew nigh to Egypt, "Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet his father, and presented himself unto him, and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while." Is there no connection to be traced between this filial piety, and the long and happy life which the honored viceroy of Egypt was permitted to enjoy?

But a still more illustrious example remains. The divine Savior voluntarily subjected himself to domestic government. He put on the weakness of infancy, and passed the gradations of childhood and youth, to maturity beneath the paternal roof. The evangelist Luke expressly says, "He went down with his parents, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." Who cannot discover in this an instructive lesson for the young! The weight of this example is to be estimated by the dignity of the Son of God. To illustrate and enforce one of his own commands, he exchanges the position of the sovereign for that of the subject. What an honor has thus been put upon the domestic government! Behold also this Savior on the cross! When the human nature was writhing under the death pang—when all his thoughts might be supposed to have been absorbed in

his own sufferings, or in the sublime object for which they were endured, he could still feel and express an interest for one whose heart was pierced with the same spear which pierced his own. Turning on the beloved disciple his dying eye, he says, "Behold thy mother." What youthful bosom can be insensible to such an instance of filial respect and affection, exhibited by such a being and under such circumstances?

O then, let me urge upon the young of this congregation, by all the arguments which have been adduced, the importance of a sacred regard to parental authority and influence. The name of father has a high and solemn import; for it has been appropriated even by Jehovah himself. To treat it with practical disrespect, involves the double guilt of rebellion against the family government and the government of God. And the name of mother; what shall we say of that? Can any other word express so much disinterested affection? How many tender images of the past does it suggest! What a weight of obligation lies in that word, *mother!* How black must be the heart that can repay all her kindness with ingratitude or neglect! Whilst you have it in your power to do honor to your parents, fail not to render it. Soon their venerable forms will have sunk into the grave. What you can do for the promotion of their happiness must be done soon, or left undone. If conscience accuse you of sin in this respect, and something whispers of reparation and confession, make haste to heal the wounds which your conduct has inflicted, and to ask forgiveness of them and of your God. With some, the possibility of craving forgiveness for filial disrespect is gone forever. So will soon go the opportunity for asking God's forgiveness. Is it the displeasure of an earthly father only that we have incurred? Has there been no high handed rebellion against God? Is not unfaithfulness in the one case, indicative of sin in the other? Has not God's holy law, in every instance of filial disobedience, been trampled under foot? According to that law, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." The awful penalty is death eternal. That penalty hangs over every sinner's soul. And fall upon him it must, unless he take shelter beneath the cross of Christ. There, and there *only* can he escape its infliction.

AN ABSTRACT OF A

SERMON,

SUITED TO THE MONTHLY CONCERT.

"Let us rise up and build."—Neh. xi. 18.

"Had not Nehemiah risen up to the work, the rest would not have built. Had he loitered he might as well have been dead. The office of a minister is solemn and of amazing importance. If ever the songs of heaven are to be brought down to earth, the ministers of the sanctuary must begin the concert and prolong the praise. Their prayers, their examples, their contributions, their thrilling appeals, and their unwearied labors, must stand in the foremost rank of every successful enterprise. If the church is ever to reach the summit of her glory, her ministers must make much nearer approaches to the holiness, zeal, and labors of the apostles.

Among the things most wanted at the present day are the following.

1. The prayer of faith. As the millennium approaches, the efficacy of prayer is to be most gloriously illustrated; for it was long ago foretold that this event would be brought about in answer to prayer. But it is no ordinary prayer, it is the Holy Ghost praying in the heart of the christian; the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. No wonder that such intercession prevails. Before every revival of religion there is a spirit of prayer for this influence that never was and never will be disappointed. It is attended with desires so agonizing as almost to break the heart, and yet so submissive as to refuse to set up any other interest or will against the interest and will of God. It is attended with a sense of absolute dependence on God, and yet with an earnest and diligent use of means that can never stop. It is marked with deep humility and self loathing, and with an awful sense of past backslidings. Nothing, this side of God himself, is so much wanted on earth as prayers like these. The prosperity of the church is waiting on the clouds for such prayers to bring it down. The world is waiting in the regions of death for such prayers to call it forth.

2. Christians must give more of their property to Christ. The Hebrews were constrained by their laws to give at least four tenths of their income. And when christians have obeyed the injunction, "Sell that ye have, and give alms;" when they have reached the point of

the poor widow who cast into the treasury all her living; when they have written *Holiness to the Lord* on all they possess, they will have gone far beyond the present guage even of liberal christians. On this subject the mass of professed believers seem scarcely to have learned the first letters of their alphabet. Immense treasures are wanted to convert the world; and before this can be accomplished every christian must hold himself a steward, ready to deliver the goods intrusted to him as fast as they are called for.

3. Christians must consecrate not only their property but themselves, as they never have done, at least since the days of Constantine, before the darkness can be swept by human instrumentality from five sixths of the earth. In past ages, few have had the heart to say, I prosper if the kingdom of Christ prospers. Too many have been satisfied with leaving the world as they found it. Satisfied with doing it no hurt, they have hugged their ease and gone down to the grave, leaving all the earth unenriched except six feet by three. There still are drones who lounge on earth and cumber the ground; who eat up the substance of the earth and make no returns. But the church must awake. There must be a vigorous pulse at the heart that will drive the streams of life through the extremities. We must hold ourselves, and all that we possess—our powers of body and mind, our time, our influence, our property, devoted to God. We must lay all our plans of business, of expenditure, of relaxation, form all our connexions and habits with a supreme reference to the glory of Christ, and go forth determined that the world shall be the happier for our living in it.

This is the high and glorious course on which I would invite you to enter. And now for the reasons.

1. The object is of infinite value. It is nothing less than the glory of God before the universe, and the translation of myriads of souls from eternal pollution and torment to immortal blessedness. Ask that redeemed spirit that sings on yonder throne—ask him a thousand ages hence, what is the value of salvation. By prayer and holy effort you may be the means of saving millions of immortal beings who otherwise would have perished, and of filling the world with the richest glories of redeeming love.

2. You ought to be wholly devoted to God, because he made you what you are, and built the world you inhabit, and furnished it for your use, and placed you in it, on purpose to serve him; and has commanded you to serve him with all your heart and soul, and has never given you a right to live to yourself a single hour, but has demanded your whole time, your whole heart, and the most zealous devotion of all your powers. What right have you to live one hour to yourselves? You are not your own, you are the creatures of God. What right have you in this world, if you will not serve him entirely? This world belongs to God. What right have you to walk his earth and to breathe his air, if you will not be wholly for him? This world is full of God. You see him. you hear him, you feel him in all things.

No other being has preserved you; no other being has watched over you night and day; no other being has fed and clothed you. And all this that you might still live and serve him. When one's eye is opened to see the immensity of his guilt, it appears a wonder of wonders that he is suffered to live an hour. He that has not seen this is still blind. Now if God will preserve us in a world of comfort rather than cast us into hell, we may well afford to work for him continually. He has done more than keep us out of hell, his tender mercies have filled our lives.

3. You ought to be wholly devoted to *Christ*, because he died to redeem you from an ignoble and eternal prison, and to raise you to the honors of the sons of God. Ye are not your own,—ye are bought with a price. What right have you to use for yourselves the powers which belong to Christ? What do you in this world if you will not wholly serve the Lord's Anointed? This world belongs to Christ. It was created *by* him and *for* him; and he has purchased it since, and received it for the residence of his church. No other being has a right to erect an interest on this ground.

And what do you not owe to the Savior of the world, for coming out to seek you when you were wandering from the fold of God, and putting a title to heaven in your hands. When you were just entering the gates of hell, he threw the arms of everlasting love around you and caught you up to the throne of God, and gave you to own suns and stars.

My brethren, let us anticipate the judgment of posterity. We are fast approaching an age when men will be devoted to God as their fathers never were; an age of action, of enterprise, of generosity, of which, in their indolent and selfish repose, former generations had no conception. This is to be the character of the whole church as it never was before. It will be the fashion and drift of society. The sordid wretch who lives for himself, will be marked and scouted as a swindler now is. A new era will have commenced. New scenes will be unfolded.

My brethren, you live in a world which has been distinguished from all the other worlds which God has made, by being selected for the theatre of redemption—for the scene of those amazing exhibitions of grace which are to carry a report to the most distant world, and to illumine and astonish the universe. Open your eyes in a clear evening on the starry heavens; and when you have filled your wondering view with the numberless worlds which float in boundless space, you will stand amazed that this planet, now reduced to a speck, has been selected to hold so conspicuous a place in the universe of God, to be a point whence shall radiate a light to illumine all worlds in the knowledge of his glory.

The time will come when the whole intelligent creation will gaze with the most intense interest upon the transactions which are now taking place on this earth. And when the inhabitants of the most distant world on that side of heaven shall hold high consultation with

the inhabitant of the most distant world on the other side of heaven, and both shall be lost in amazement at the events which have taken place on this planet, how will it seem to have been permitted to live on this earth and to take a part in bringing forward these supreme wonders of the universe.

You have the infinite privilege to live in a world where a church founded in blood is training up for glory,—to live among the records and memorials of the most astonishing facts that ever commanded the admiration of creatures. Amidst these amazing operations, which are to send their report echoing through the universe, you stand. You are among the number whose efforts are to consummate the work of redemption, and to send out a report through planets, stars and constellations, to the remotest world, to prolong its echoes through eternity. In this laboratory of the universe will you be idle? Let them sleep in Mercury, and Saturn, and Herschel; I had almost said, let them sleep in heaven; but sleep not ye in such a world as this. It is your lot to live in one of the most interesting periods of this most favored world; you find christendom teeming with institutions and projects for promoting the kingdom of Christ; give them your firm and unwearied support. If you will not do this, get ye back to the dark ages, ye do not belong to the present period.

You see the dawn of that day which prophets and kings desired to see, and which is watched by millions of eyes from heaven. They might sleep under the Old Testament dispensation; they might sleep in the ages of papal darkness; but now it is high time to awake out of sleep.

O my brethren, to what a birthright are we born. Under what a crushing weight of responsibility do we lie. What a voice of authority comes down from heaven; what appeals to our conscience, our compassions, our gratitude. What calls come in from the four quarters of the globe to break our hearts and to awaken our undivided, untiring, undying zeal. I hear a voice of wailing from the ends of the earth. I see nations weltering in their blood. I hear a loud lament from the eternal pit. By the joys of one world and the miseries of two, by the compassions and blood of a dying Savior, by the authority of the everlasting God, I conjure you, I entreat you, my brethren, to wake up to this awful voice of heaven, to these dying groans of a world."

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 4. Vol. XVI.) APRIL, 1842. (Whole No. 184.

SERMON CCCXXI.

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SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY IN A CONGREGATION.

"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."—Acts ii. 47.

Never was there a cause more hopeless of success, than the cause of Christ, at the commencement of its progress on earth. It had arrayed against it the prejudice and the power of the whole Jewish nation; and of the whole Gentile world too. Its friends were few and despised—without wealth, without learning, without power. Its founder had just been condemned and crucified as a malefactor, and the little flock that had followed him on earth, intimidated and discouraged by the storms of persecution that began to rage around them, quit the field—retired into an upper room in Jerusalem.

Close the page of history now, and tell me, men of the world, what became of this cause? Did it survive a single generation? Did its advocates ever dare renew their efforts to defend or to propagate it? Were they not speedily crushed by the same hand of power that had been raised to destroy their Leader? and did not every vestige of the religion to which they were devoted, pass away in a few brief years, as forgotten superstition? So it might have been predicted with absolute certainty, according to all principles of human calculation. But look at the fact. Upon the very spot of its apparent defeat, christianity set up its standard, and commenced the conquest of the world. Within ten days after the ascension of our Lord, three thousand were added to the number of his disciples. Shortly after, the number was raised to five thousand. Then we hear of great multitudes, both of men and women, joining themselves to the Lord; and the cause continued to advance, till within about thirty years after the death of Christ, it had not only extended its conquests to all the principal cities of Asia Minor and Greece, but penetrated to the heart of the Roman empire, and set up its banner by the palace of the Cæsars. Thence its victories were spread abroad, till, under Constantine, the empire became christian; and the temples of idolatry were closed, and the altars of impiety demolished.

If now we inquire for the cause of this rapid spread of the gospel, this wonderful increase of the church, the secret is disclosed in our text. The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. The power of his Spirit attended the ministration of his word, and all obstacles fell before it. In this fact we have not only a sure pledge of the final triumph of the gospel over the earth, but are pointed directly to the *means* on which we can rely in efforts to hasten on the glorious consummation. The means are as simple as they are efficacious. They are *light* and *love;* truth in the mind and affection in the heart, impelling the friends of Christ to labor, in faith and zeal and prayer, for the salvation of others; and the Lord working with them, accessions will continually be made to the church of such as shall be saved, till the whole world shall be converted to God.

But not to dwell on so great a subject as the ultimate spread of the gospel over the earth, it will better comport with the object I have in view, to show how the great design of the gospel can best be promoted in a particular congregation, within the sphere of our own personal influence. I propose, therefore, in the present discourse,

I. To consider in what the true prosperity of a congregation, including church and society, consists; and then,

II. Point out some of the means best adapted to promote that prosperity.

I. In what then does the true prosperity of a congregation consist? This to some may seem too plain a question to need a formal answer. But if I mistake not, there is a great want of clear and just views on this subject. Many appear to think of the prosperity of a religious society much as they do of the prosperity of a manufacturing company, or of a banking establishment. Their conceptions are all earthly, secular, selfish; leaving entirely out of mind the *spiritual* character of the association, and the peculiarity of the end for which it exists.

Let it be observed, then, that the prosperity of a congregation does not consist in the *number* of its members. The one hundred and twenty disciples who were collected together in an upper room in Jerusalem, and there continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, had more moral power, and were qualified to exert a mightier influence on the spiritual condition of the world, than all the thousands who then composed the Jewish church. The one was a collection of true christians—of living members of Christ's body; the other was a dead carcass, in which the principle of spiritual life was extinct.

That numbers, associated in a congregation, do not constitute its prosperity, how impressively does the Savior teach us, in the fact, that when multitudes, under a mistaken notion of the nature and design of his kingdom, followed him from place to place, he often disappointed and dispersed them by inculcating some weighty truth, or enjoining some self denying duty, which would detect their false hopes, and cause them to turn back and walk no more with him. Our blessed Lord regarded no one as a friend who was not ready to

forsake all for him, and nothing as adding strength to his cause but the living piety and practical devotedness of his followers to the interests of his kingdom. And this is as true now as it was in the days of his flesh.

Nor does the prosperity of a congregation consist in the *wealth* of its individual or associated members. A religious society may have wealth and grandeur and worldly power, and yet be, in the eyes of the Savior, both wretched and poor and blind and naked. It was so with the church of the Laodiceans; and it is so with many a church in this land at the present day—rich in worldly goods, but poor in all the graces of the Spirit. It is an instructive lesson, taught us by all history, that the worst days of the church have been the days of her greatest worldly grandeur. It is with religious societies as with individuals; not one in a thousand can maintain a spirit of humble, useful piety, amid the fascinations of high life, or the corrupting influences of wealth and station.

Nor again does the prosperity of a congregation consist in the mere *harmony* of its members. Union is strength in this case only where it is based on truth and holiness, and is cemented by the flowing together of hearts, warmed with the love of God and bent upon doing his will. The harmony of stupiditiy and worldliness, of pride and self sufficiency and self pleasedness, is no evidence of prosperity, but the reverse. It is like the repose that steals over the body when its vital powers are sinking under some mortal disease. There is harmony in the grave yard, but there are no fruits unto holiness there. Contentions and divisions in a congregation are indeed a great evil; but they are scarcely greater than the stagnation of spiritual insensibility and lukewarmness. Many a church and society have sunk into utter decay and fruitlessness, under the calm of indifference to truth and God, and contentment with their condition of peace and harmony.

Nor, once more, does the prosperity of a congregation consist in the convenience or splendor of its *exterior accommodations*. These are not to be undervalued; neither are they to have the first or the second place in our estimation. There were those of old, in the Jewish church, who boasted of their external privileges, and were wont to cry: "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these;" while yet they lay under the rebuke of Jehovah for trusting in lying words, and were bidden to amend their ways lest they should fall under impending judgments. The worship which was wont to be paid, in primitive times, in some deserted out-house, or cave, or solitary retreat, was far more acceptable to God than all the gorgeous rites and ceremonies of the Jewish temple service. It is not the splendor of the edifice in which we worship, nor the cushioned seats on which we sit, nor the melting notes of music, swelled by the organ's rich tones, nor all the talent and learning that can be made to emanate from the pulpit, that can suffice to build up a congregation in holiness, or make them a people prepared unto the Lord. These things may attract the gay, the thought-

less and the worldly; and for a time, while the novelty lasts, may fill the place of worship with those who go there to be amused; and a looker on, deceived by appearances, might say, *there is a flourishing congregation;* but to the eye of Him who looketh beyond appearances, all this may be but empty show, vain, unmeaning compliment. Something beyond all this is necessary to the true prosperity of a religious society. What that is can be stated in a few words.

The great design of God in the organization of local churches, and of societies as connected with them, is the edification of christians in the faith and love of the gospel; and the conversion of sinners to the knowledge and belief of the truth. In other words, it is to promote holiness in the church and salvation among the impenitent. All other ends are inferior and subordinate to this; and any congregation may be regarded as prosperous or otherwise, just in proportion as this great end of its existence is secured or not. Where the work of spiritual edification is going on in a religious society, christians growing in grace, and sinners, under the influence of truth and the Spirit of God, are awakened to think on their ways and turn unto the Lord, there is true prosperity in a congregation; for there is attained the great end for which congregations are organized, and for which God sends to them his gospel and the various means of grace.

The way is now prepared to consider —

II. The means of spiritual prosperity in a congregation.

1. A faithful devoted ministry. And by this we mean, not a ministry of talent and learning merely, but a ministry of truth and piety; intelligent in the scriptures, serious, laborious, prayerful; seeking not so much to be popular as to be useful; not so much to please as to bring to repentance and a holy life; bold, independent, decided in duty, yet kind, conciliating and yielding in things non-essential; and which, while it meditates much and deeply on the great truths which are unto salvation, that so it may impart worth and power to its Sabbath ministrations, loves also to go forth from the retirement of the study to mingle with the people in acts of sympathy and pastoral attentions; and thus enforces, in the intimacy of private intercourse, the lessons of instruction and warning which it is wont to publish from the pulpit.

A ministry of this character turns into feebleness all the efforts of mere talent and genius. It may have but little to attract or please a mere worldly mind; but it has that which, in the prosperity of a congregation, is of more importance than all talent and learning; that which God owns and blesses in the conversion of sinners and in the building up of his own people in faith and love.

The kind of ministry best adapted to promote the true interests of a religious society is often greatly misunderstood. The first question with many, in the call and settlement of a minister, is, not whether he is sound in the faith, eminently pious, devoted and active; but, is he a 'smart man,' a 'man of talents,' a 'popular preacher?' And they are wont to estimate his ministrations, not by their adaptedness to feed the church of God and bring sinners to repentance and a holy

life, but by their being characterized by popular and attractive qualities, fine speaking, eloquent sentences, and brilliant images.

Now all this is entire mistake, and is doing immense mischief in many of the congregations in our land. It is a mistake founded in a total misapprehension as to the nature and design of the ministry.—Instead of its being regarded as ordained of God, to make men holy and fit them for heaven, it is converted into a mere vehicle of intellectual entertainment or of tasteful amusement. Let it not be thought that we attach little importance to talents and learning and eloquence in the ministry. Would to God that all his servants possessed these gifts in a much larger measure than they do; provided also that they possessed a piety which would sanctify these gifts and lay them all at the foot of the cross.

But alone, or when allowed to hold the chief place in the estimation of a congregation, they are of little worth in promoting its spiritual prosperity. Nay, in many cases, their only effect is to bring on spiritual decay and fruitlessness. And hence the fact, that many congregations wither and die, under what is called popular preaching, while many others are edified in truth and holiness under a ministry of little pretensions to genius or distinguished talent, but plain, serious, and devoted to the Master's work in the Master's way.

It cannot be too deeply impressed on our minds, that however distinguished the instrument employed in dispensing the truth to a congregation, the excellency of the power is all of God; and God will bless no ministry that does not consecrate all its attainments to his glory, and labor to advance his cause in the use of the very means which he in his infinite wisdom has seen fit to appoint. Among these means, I need not say, a clear and full exhibition of God's truth holds the first place. It is the extremest folly to think of building up the cause of Christ by a compromise or concealment of the great distinguishing doctrines of his gospel. True, these doctrines are not agreeable to the unsanctified heart; and when hard pressed with them, sinners often feel as if they could bear it no longer; still there is something in them so deeply interesting and solemn, something that so commends itself to the conscience and the felt wants of the soul, that they will come again and again to the place where they are plainly and faithfully preached, and listen with unspeakably more attention and feeling than they ever do to preaching from which these doctrines are excluded.

Let the ministry, then, that would see the work of the Lord prospering among the people of its charge, be plain and discriminating in its exhibitions of the great doctrines and duties of the gospel,—the character and the law of God, the guilt and ruin of man, his help in the atoning blood of Christ, and the agency of a sanctifying Spirit, together with the calls and warnings of divine mercy, and the rewards and punishments of another world. These are the only elements of effective and useful preaching; and the ministry that dwells upon them with affectionate earnestness and frequency, pointing to the awful realities of sin, of death, and the terrors of a coming judg-

ment on the one hand; and on the other, to the peace speaking blood of Jesus, and the proffered aids of the Spirit, and the crown of life in heaven; will never be left to address empty walls or a drowsy audience, but will gather around it a people hungering for the bread of life, and in earnest in the business of salvation.

2. Another thing essential to the prosperity of a congregation is spirituality in the church, a living active piety in the professed people of God. The church is styled by the apostle the pillar and ground of the truth;—the great instrument of sustaining and propagating true religion in the world. This is said of the church universal; the whole body of believers. But each individual church possesses this same character just so far as it is a true church of Christ. It is the distinguishing character of every such church, that it *believes* and *feels* and *practically* exhibits the truth of God, as revealed in his word, and puts forth proper efforts to spread that truth through the world. And no man is qualified to unite with the church, or can stand approved as a worthy member of it, only so far as he is prepared and disposed to live and to labor for the furtherance of this great design of the church's existence—the maintaining and extending of the reign of truth and holiness on earth.

Now a church that truly sustains this high character, whether its members be few or many, rich or poor in this world's goods, must, of necessity, exert a powerful influence in the community where it exists. It is a city set on a hill which cannot be hid. Its members, both in their associated and individual character, shine as lights in the world. They are living illustrations of the truth and power of the gospel; standing out to the eye of the community as a society of a distinctive, holy character; and the effect is great in giving efficacy to the means of grace, and aiding the ministry in the work of saving souls.

Indeed, every year's experience has gone to convince me, more and more, that the most faithful ministry can ordinarily accomplish very little in promoting the spiritual interests of a congregation without the efficient co-operation of the church. It is the ministry and the church combined, not either alone, but both combined as a joint, co-operating agency, which is the instrument appointed of God for the conversion of men. The missionary, who labors where there is no church, may hope for success through his labors alone; but not the pastor, who labors in the midst of a church that withholds the co-operation of its prayers and efforts; or which does not sustain the character of a truly living, spiritual church. The instrumentality ordained of God is not employed. An essential part of it is kept back, and little or no fruit is gathered unto eternal life.

Here, I doubt not, is one principal cause why many a faithful minister is left to wear out his life with comparatively little success in his work. He is left to labor alone. There is a want of spirituality in the church; of living, active piety in those who should be his helpers in the Lord. Instead of sustaining him in his labors by their sympathy and co-operation and prayers, they dishearten and discourage him by their indifference and worldliness; and thus counteract and defeat

the proper influence of the means of grace. The world will form their opinion of religion from the conduct of those who profess it, much more than from what is said of it from the pulpit or in the Bible. Example speaks louder than words. If professing christians show no interest in religion, beyond a mere profession of it, the inference is a very natural one, that it is of no importance. And this inference will be drawn by impenitent men. No preaching on earth can prevent it; and the effect is fatal. Though an angel from heaven should preach the gospel on the Sabbath, he would labor in vain, if the members of the church, or any considerable number of them, were all the week contradicting his preaching by their indifference to the gospel and the high concerns of eternity. It is no difficult thing, and I fear no uncommon thing, for the members of a church to defeat entirely the great ends of the ministry, as exercised among them, and to render the gospel of no power in respect to the conviction and conversion of sinners. The beloved John felt this; and therefore exhorted the disciples of his day,—Look to yourselves that we lose not those things that we have wrought among you, but that we receive a full reward. And the apostle Paul felt this; and therefore, when he went forth preaching the gospel, he cast himself on the prayers of the brethren, and besought the fellowship of their sympathy and labors, that so the word of God might have free course and run and be glorified.

It is only when a church exhibits to the world a visible exemplification of the spirit and power of true religion; it is only when its members, realizing the end for which they have been called into the kingdom of the Savior, go forth at his bidding, to do his will, and can be appealed to, as were christians of old, as "living epistles of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, seen and read of all men;" it is only when a church sustains the character of manifest spirituality, abiding in Christ and striving with the ministry to carry forward the great design of his mediation, that it answers the true end of its organization, or exerts the influence which it is commissioned to exert in promoting the interests of religion in the community where it exists.

Hence the necessity of great carefulness in the admission of members to the church, that none enter it but such as are approved of God and are prepared to bear the responsibilities and perform the duties of church membership,—the necessity also of maintaining a kind, but vigilant discipline, that such as sin may be reclaimed, and if not reclaimed, may be removed, that so the church be not despised nor the word of God blasphemed.

A church that opens the door of its communion to unsanctified persons, or retains in its bosom those who dishonor God by corrupt sentiments or wicked lives, may exist indeed; but it exists not as a city set on a hill to guide men to holiness and heaven, but as a baleful meteor to blind and deceive them on their way to eternity.

3. The prosperity of a congregation demands that special attention be paid to the religious instruction of the young. The children and

youth of a congregation are its principal hope as to future accessions of strength and support. It is among these especially, that God gathers the trophies of his grace, and raises up instruments to carry forward his cause in the world. Search the records of our churches, and you will find that the greater part of those who give evidence of piety in them, were converted in early life; most of them under twenty years of age; few above thirty; fewer still above forty; and above fifty, not one in a hundred. A husbandman would see but little encouragement to cultivate trees that had stood a half a century in his garden without bearing fruit. He would rather turn his attention to the tender shoots, and to plants just springing from the ground. So in cultivating the vineyard of the Lord; the great aim should be to take care of the young; to bring them as early as possible under the influence of an efficient system of religious instruction, that so they may rise up a generation prepared for the service of the Lord.

The system of Sabbath school teaching, wisely and vigorously conducted, is above all praise; and no congregation can expect to prosper, at this day, in which such a school is not maintained, and its children gathered into it, and efficiently instructed by the pious and intelligent part of its members.

But in addition to this, family instruction and household religion must be maintained. This was constantly and universally done in the early days of New England; and it has effected more than any other means, to keep alive and perpetuate piety and truth in our churches. *There is no substitute for family instruction.* Parents cannot throw off this duty upon Sabbath schools, without irreparable loss both to themselves and their offspring. God has committed it to *them*, and upon their faithful discharge of it, depends the character of the rising generation, and consequently, the state of religion in the community where they dwell. The neglect of parental instruction is like a frost in spring or a drought in summer; it cuts off the hope of harvest, and brings on blight and ruin. We could earnestly wish that the good old custom of catechetical instruction were revived in all our families, and practised, as in former days, by the pastors of all our churches. The effect, we cannot doubt, would be eminently happy, in reviving religion and raising up a generation to serve God when the present generation has passed away.

But whatever means may be adopted in the religious instruction of the young, the duty itself is admitted by all to be one of supreme importance. It lies at the very foundation of congregational prosperity, and should engage the special regards both of pastor and people. Every church, in a particular manner, is bound to strive together in its prayers and efforts for its baptized children and youth. They have been consecrated to God, that they might be trained up for his service and kingdom; and though not properly members of the church, they sustain a *peculiar* relation to the church; are entitled, in virtue of their baptism, to peculiar privileges, and have peculiar promises made to them; and every church that would see religion prospering in their midst, should not fail to give special attention to its baptized youth,

bearing them to the throne of grace in the prayers of the family and the congregation, and collecting them, from time to time, to receive pastoral instruction, and to be commended to God in the united supplications of the whole assembled brotherhood.

4. Another thing essential to the prosperity of a congregation is a serious and habitual attendance upon the means of grace. The Sabbath, the ministry, the sanctuary, and the various services performed there, are of no use to those who neglect them; and are of very little use to those who do not attend upon them with constancy and religious seriousness. Those persons who attend public worship only occasionally, or half a day on the Sabbath, or who attend from mere custom or fashion, with no proper impression of the solemn nature of the services in which they engage, pervert and abuse the means of grace; and so far as practical utility is concerned, might almost as well never enter a place of worship. It is a very great evil, when people fall into the habit of irregularity in their attendance upon the worship of God in his house, or when they come there as a mere matter of form or decent observance. In sending the means of grace to a people, God sends them the offer of salvation, and upon the manner in which they improve them, depends their condition in eternity.

What we wish to inculcate under this head, is the habit of attending upon the means of grace, *as means ordained of God for the spiritual improvement and salvation of the soul*,—the habit of attending upon them constantly and prayerfully, with a serious desire to be made wise by them unto eternal life. It is needless to remark the effect of such an attendance upon the spiritual state of a congregation. While it indicates a high degree of present prosperity, it is the surest means of perpetuating and extending it in time to come. It has been ascertained by an examination of facts, and it accords with the observation of every pastor, that by far the greater part of those who regularly attend public worship, sooner or later become christians, and die in the hope of salvation; while it is one of the rarest occurrences, that one who neglects public worship, or attends upon it only occasionally and carelessly, is ever brought to repentance and hope of life.

But besides the stated worship of God on the Sabbath, there are other occasional services during the week, which have been found of great importance to the spiritual welfare of a congregation. Among these are the meetings for familiar instruction and lecturing, for conference and prayer and consultation. All experience goes to demonstrate the utility of such meetings. They bring the pastor into easy and familiar intercourse with his people; are most happily adapted to keep alive a spirit of piety in the church, and to awaken and direct inquiry among the impenitent. No congregation can expect to prosper in its spiritual interests, in which these meetings are neglected, or are attended upon coldly and formally. Especially may this be said of the meetings of the church for consultation and

prayer. They are an infallible index of the state of religion in a church, and are at the same time most intimately connected with the prosperity of religion in a congregation. Show me a church where the prayer meeting is thinly attended or not attended at all, and I will show you a church where the pulse of spiritual life beats low, and stupidity and death reign among the impenitent. Strange that churches are so slow to learn their dependence on God, their continual need of his presence and Spirit, and the essential importance of prayer to the enjoyment of these blessings.

No community on earth is intrusted with interests so diversified, important and difficult, as are committed to every church of Christ. It is called to maintain the cause of truth and piety in the community where it exists, to consult and act for the religious education of the young, for the conversion of sinners, and the extension of Christ's kingdom on earth. And yet how next to impossible is it to convene statedly the members of almost any church to attend to these high interests, and pray for the blessing of God on their labors. The directors of a banking concern are wont to meet every day to transact their secular business. But the members of our churches, at least great numbers of them, seem to think it too much to meet once a week, or even once a month, to spend an hour in consulting and praying together, for the salvation of men and the progress of the Redeemer's cause in the world. This is all wrong; and it operates fatally to obstruct the prosperity of religion. It was not thus that the primitive churches became the lights of the world and the means of extending the triumphs of the cross into a thousand lands. With them the cause of the Savior was a common cause; and they devoted to it their best energies. And so it must be again, before the gospel will have free course among men, and the light of millennial day rise to bless this dark world.

5. It is essential to the prosperity of a congregation, that the friends of God in it feel a benevolent concern for the spiritual interests of those around them, and put forth serious and direct efforts for their salvation.

The design of God, we have said, in the organization of a church, is not its own edification alone; there is another still more important end in view—the conversion of sinners within the sphere of its influence; and no church answers the end of its being, that does not undertake this work in serious earnest.

In addition to family instruction and Sabbath schools, and efforts made in behalf of baptized children, there is a wide field for benevolent exertion, in relation to growing multitudes in the midst of us, who are living in a condition as hopeless of salvation, as the heathen themselves. I say in the midst of us; — for they are to be found within the limits of all our parishes, at our very doors, and in the bosom of our families, it may be. Yes, within the sound of your church bell, or within a half hour's walk of the place where we are met, there are hundreds, among them many entire families, who live

in the habitual neglect of the gospel and all its ordinances; and who, with none to care for their souls, are passing on to death and eternity in a state of undisturbed ignorance and sin.

It has been ascertained from unquestionable data, that from one quarter to one third of the people, even in the most favored portions of our highly favored New England, who are of a proper age to attend public worship, live in the habitual neglect of this duty, and are as really, though voluntarily, separated from all the saving influences of the gospel, as are the pagans of another continent. This is an appalling fact, and may well awaken the deepest solicitude in all the friends of religion. If something be not soon done to check the progress of this wide spreading evil, it will ere long act with tremendous effect upon our churches and congregations, and uproot the gospel from many a place where its ministrations are now enjoyed. And what can be done to turn back this great and growing evil? How is that part of our population to be reached, who neglect the Sabbath and the house of God? How can they be roused from their lethargy in sin, and brought under the enlightening and saving influences of the gospel? Will they, by a primary impulse from themselves, seek the means of grace? No more than the heathen will come to your shores, seeking your Sabbaths and your Bibles. The first movement must be made *towards them*, by those who love and care for their souls.

They must be sought, and kindly conversed with, and taken by the hand, and brought to the place where the means of grace are dispensed, and there furnished with such accommodations as may retain them under the influence of a preached gospel. Here is work for the pious and benevolent in our churches, and it is work that must be done. Is it your duty to send the gospel to the heathen? and is it not equally your duty to attempt the salvation of those who are perishing at your own doors? Is it an act of benevolence to bring a poor pagan to the knowledge of God? and is it not equally an act of benevolence to persuade your careless, impenitent neighbor to keep the Sabbath, and occupy a place in the sanctuary, where he may learn his duty and be saved? If churches and societies, trusting to their own wealth and strength, and satisfied with their own abundant privileges, become indifferent to the spiritual wants of the perishing around and in the midst of them, God will withdraw from them his blessings, turn their strength into weakness, their wealth into poverty, and their light will go out in darkness. How many churches are there in the land, which, instead of increasing in spiritual strength, are pining away and ready to die, in the midst of the best advantages ever granted to men, just because they feel rich and strong, and care not for the spiritual welfare of those who are perishing within sight of their sanctuaries! It is absolutely indispensable to the spiritual health and vigor of any church, that its members be employed in doing good; that they habituate themselves to care, to pray and act for the salvation of those whom divine providence brings within the range of their influence. And what field so ap-

propriate to engage their benevolent exertions, as that which lies spread out under their very eye, — perishing immortals, passing on with them to the scenes of eternal destiny, in ignorance and neglect of the great salvation? What might not be accomplished, if the members of our churches, in the true spirit of their Master, were earnestly to set themselves to the work of reclaiming these unhappy persons to duty and to God? It cannot be done by the pastors alone. They may lead and help in it; but they need, and must have the efficient co-operation of christians; and acting in joint agency in this matter, what great things might be done! A tract might be given to one, a book lent to another, a kind word spoken to another, the offer of a seat in the church, or of a place in the Sabbath school for the children might be made to another, and christian sympathy and love might be manifested to all; and while those engaged in this work would find a rich reward in the increase of their piety and joy and hope, multitudes, now perishing in sin, would be gathered into the congregation and ultimately into the church, who would be its strength and support, when those who were instrumental in turning them to righteousness, are gone to their rest in heaven.

6. Closely connected with this topic, and not less essential to the prosperity of a congregation, is the habit of bearing an active part in the benevolent operations of the day. It is with churches as with individuals; they that water shall also themselves be watered; they that scatter abroad the treasures of life, are themselves enriched with the graces of the Spirit, and shine as lights in the world. No fact is established by a greater amount of experience than this. The way to have much religion at home, is to carry much of it abroad. The way for a church to grow strong is to go out of itself, and learn to feel and act for the salvation of a dying world.

The grand design of the Savior, in establishing a church on earth, is, that it might fulfil his purpose of love, in causing his gospel to be preached to every creature; and every local church that acts on this principle, or answers, in any good degree, this great end of its existence, has the promise of the continual presence of the Redeemer to secure both its prosperity and its perpetuity. When was it ever known, that a church, acting in the spirit of an enlarged benevolence, devising and executing liberal things for the good of mankind, became feeble or fell under spiritual decay? And when, on the contrary, was it ever known that a church was prospered, whose members were indifferent to the calls of benevolence, and took no active part in helping forward the great object of the world's conversion?

So thoroughly am I convinced of the inseparable connection between benevolent effort and congregational prosperity, that I know of no method, which I would so soon recommend to a feeble church or society for reviving their strength, and building themselves up, as that of caring and giving for the good of others; and on no ground could I so certainly predict the spiritual decay and final ruin of a congregation, as that of its looking coldly on the great objects of benevo-

lence, and refusing to bear a part in accomplishing the end at which they aim, the spread of the gospel through the world.

7. There is one other thing, more important than any yet mentioned to the prosperity of a congregation; *it is the presence and blessing of the Holy Spirit.* Without this, all other means are of no use. Paul may plant and Apollos water; but it is God who giveth the increase. And where the increase of God is not given, there is no spiritual prosperity. It is little that a congregation may deem itself strong in wealth, in numbers, in union, and the possession of all outward accommodations and means of grace. In the enjoyment of all these advantages, many a congregation has been smitten with spiritual decay, and sunk into imbecility and weakness. It is the presence of God in his house that constitutes its real glory, and makes it the gate of heaven to those who worship there. It is his Spirit, attending the ministration of his word and ordinances, that renders them profitable to the people, and builds them up in faith and love. And no minister or people should rest satisfied with outward advantages, however perfect they may be, nor think themselves prosperous, when the work of spiritual edification and conversion is not going on.

When this is the case, it is certain that there is something wrong, and the evil, whatever it be, should be sought out and removed, and no rest be taken till the presence of God be restored, and his Spirit is felt to be near, in those secret, yet mighty influences, by which he subdues all things to himself. And when those influences are granted, then is prosperity enjoyed in the highest and best sense. The pastor, quickened and encouraged in his work, preaches, with peculiar unction and power, the truths which are unto salvation. The church arises and shines, her light being come, and the glory of the Lord being risen upon her. The congregation feels the mighty presence of God, and is awed into silence and thoughtfulness before him. The Sabbath, the sanctuary, the place of conference and prayer, and all the means of grace, seem invested with a divine and all-subduing power, and many are seen coming forward to join themselves to the Lord in the bonds of an everlasting covenant. So it is when a congregation is favored with the presence and the Spirit of God. All obstacles fall before him; and his truth, clothed with his power, goes forth from conquering to conquer. Here is the only sure basis of spiritual prosperity. As revivals of religion are our only hope for the conversion of the world, so are they for the prosperity of religion in any religious society. Their cessation, even for a short time, brings on declension and decay, which threatens utter desolation; what then would be the consequence of their entire suspension? Vital religion would become extinct in our churches; and "churches without vital religion are but the splendid sepulchre of souls, and the gateway to hell."

Having thus pointed out what seem to us some of the most essential means of congregational prosperity, what remains, my friends, but that we commend them to the special regards of the religious society which takes possession to-day of the place in which its future worship is to be paid to the Most High God? It is well, my brethren, that you have erected this goodly edifice, and furnished it with all that is necessary to the comfort and convenience of public worship. It is in good keeping with your own substantial prosperity, and with the sacred object to which you have dedicated it; and it may well be regarded as among the means of rendering you a prosperous congregation.

But, my friends, you will not forget, that all this expense of property, and display of art and taste, will be in vain, if you look not beyond your outward accommodations; if you enjoy not the presence of God in the services which are here to be performed. With devout thankfulness, then, for past favors received from the hand of your God, enter this new temple, which you have erected for his praise, with fervent and united supplications, that he would enter it with you, and here abide forever to bless you with his presence and his love. Let that same gospel be continued to be preached here, under the influence of which you have been raised up from small beginnings to become two bands, and have now found it necessary for your accommodation, to provide this enlarged and more convenient place of worship. The saving power of that gospel has often been proved in the midst of you, by the repeated revivals of religion which you have enjoyed, and by which great numbers have been gathered into the fold of the Savior on earth, and prepared for his kingdom in heaven. Let not that gospel be exchanged for another, which is yet not another; but continue, as in time past, to desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby. Let the church realize the end for which it was organized and has an existence in the midst of this community; and let its members, from this day, rise up to a higher standard of piety, and strive together, in their prayers and efforts, for the salvation of the rising generation, especially of the lambs of the flock who have upon them the seal of the covenant. If you would have the means of grace, which you hope here to enjoy, effectual to build you up in holiness and make you meet for heaven, attend upon them with constancy; attend upon them with seriousness and religious veneration.

With the return of every Sabbath, and at other times as you have opportunity, repair, with grateful minds, to this sanctuary to meet your God and Savior, and receive from him the blessings which he ever waits to bestow upon true worshipers. And while you are thus blessed with hearing the joyful sound of the gospel, and are cheered on your way to eternity with the hope full of immortality, forget not the condition of perishing men around you; but seriously set about the work of saving them, that they may share with you in the joys and hopes of eternal life. Go out, in the spirit of your Mas-

ter, into the highways and hedges, into the streets and lanes of your town, seek out the poor and the neglected, the unwarned and the ignorant, and bring them to the house of God, that they may hear his word and live.

Nor forget the poor, dying heathen, but pity them as the Savior pitied you; and strive, with others, to send to them the blessings of the great salvation. And withal, let your prayers ascend up to God daily, that he would pour out upon you his Spirit, to give efficacy to the means of grace, and revive his work among you with power and glory. Set your hearts upon this as an attainable blessing; and remember that it is a blessing essential to all spiritual prosperity. Pray then for the effusions of the Holy Spirit upon you. Welcome this mighty, this gracious, this all-subduing Spirit to your bosoms, to your families, to your church and congregation, and let the opening of a new place of worship be signalized by the commencement of a revival of religion. This will do more to make you a prosperous and happy people, than all other means combined. The Holy Spirit dwelling with you, a preached gospel will be to you a savor of life unto life. The services of the Sabbath and of the sanctuary will be instinct with life and power, and build you up in truth and love. Sinners awakened from the sleep of death, will turn their feet into the path of life, and come here in growing crowds, to devote themselves to their Redeemer and God. The aged, as they pass from the stage of life, will rejoice to see others rising up to fill their places as the servants of God; and parents, as they descend into the vale of years, will be happy in seeing their children treading in their steps, and preparing to follow them to heaven. Thus blessed with the presence of God's Spirit, you will be built up on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, and can never fall. You will be safe amid all changes, and safe forever. The Lord will plant his banner over you, which is love; and so long as that floats above your sanctuary, the gates of hell will not prevail against you.

Hear, then, fellow immortals, all of you, the word of exhortation. As you have dedicated this house, so dedicate yourselves to God, and take refuge, every one, beneath the pavilion of his mercy. Then, when this temple, in which we now feebly attempt the high praises of God, shall be crumbled into dust, when all the monuments of art and works of man shall be consumed by the fires of the last day, you shall bow and worship in a temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and forever adore the hand that formed it, the grace that conducted you to it, and the Savior who fills it with his presence and glory.

SERMON CCCXXII.

By Rev. JOHN S. C. ABBOTT,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN NANTUCKET.

RECIPROCAL DUTIES OF PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

"Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers."—Acts xx. 28.

The time was when the pastoral union was invested with a degree of permanency which it has now unhappily lost. It is my prayer that it may speedily be restored, and that, if it be the divine will, the relation into which we have entered may not be severed till death shall sever it. Though we know not what an hour may bring forth, I would hope to resign my body to the dust of your burial ground, and there, as a faithful pastor, sleeping in the midst of his beloved flock, await the resurrection summons.

It seems important, upon this occasion, that we should reflect upon the reciprocal duties of pastor and people.

1. The preaching of the gospel is the pre-eminent duty of the christian minister. It is expressly to preach the gospel, that the ministry is instituted. It is the voice of the living preacher, urging with all the powers of heart and utterance the love of the Savior, and the dread sanctions of futurity, which God blesses to the upbuilding of his church. All other duties should be subservient to the necessary preparation to preach the gospel. Hundreds of immortal souls are each Sabbath assembled to hear the divine message. The christian minister is God's ambassador to them. And with whatever abilities he may be endowed, he must consecrate all to the faithful enforcement of religious truth. He must diligently study, that logic may give precision to his address—that sound argument may fortify —that illustrations may adorn and illumine—that simplicity may make the opaque transparent—that rhetoric in its noblest sense may captivate the conscience and the heart. The word of truth must be rightly divided to "give to each a portion"—such a portion as each

one needs. How difficult this? Some of his hearers are engulfed in the vortices of false philosophy; some whirling in the wild career of utter godlessness and guilt; some deceived with false hopes or deceiving with false pretences; some stupid, with conscience seared and heart of granite; some tender, affectionate, trembling—with crushed and fainting spirit feeling after God. To meet these wants requires thought—long and anxious and prayerful study. And the faithful christian minister must consecrate the best hours of every week to this infinitely arduous work.

And yet he must engage in other studies besides immediate preparation for the pulpit. He must search the scriptures in their original languages; he must keep up a general acquaintance with the literature and the rapidly advancing science of the day; he must furnish his mind to encounter the unbeliever and the errorist on their own ground, and to defend the gospel; he must keep himself informed respecting the great moral movements of the age; he must not forget the mighty power of the press—that the world demands a christian literature,—that it is the duty of some of the christian ministry to endeavor to supply that want.

These duties demand, that at least every moment of the morning hours be consecrated uninterruptedly to study. These hours should be held sacred from any encroachment. The people should feel that their pastor, in all his studies, is toiling for them, and they should cordially co-operate in securing for him the unbroken hours of the morning.

2. The christian minister must also visit his people. Without this, though learned, though eloquent even, he cannot be in the highest degree useful. By personal acquaintance alone can he ascertain the temptations, the conflicts, the trials, the spiritual condition of the members of his charge. He must visit, not a few families merely, but all his flock. He must sacrifice, if necessary, the attractions of friendship and of congenial habits and taste, to his duties as a laborious and impartial parish minister, who must account to God for each soul entrusted to his care. And especially wherever poverty lays its heavy hand, or age is crushed with infirmities, or the suffering invalid, with weak and perishing body, lingers on the bed of pain, or the widow's heart is bleeding with anguish,—wherever there is any one bowed down beneath the burden of life, it is there, there peculiarly that the christian minister is bound to go.

There are probably more than two hundred families connected with this large congregation,—all of whom must be visited. The sick and bereaved must be visited often; weddings must be attended, and funerals. There are days of sickness and of storms when no visits can be made. The reception of parishioners and other friends, and various family cares, necessarily engross an important portion of one's time. There are public duties of associations and councils and societies of benevolence, which claim attention. And seasons of re-

laxation are absolutely indispensable to the hard student, that the exhausted system may recover its tone. How often then can a minister, with his utmost diligence, in the midst of these interruptions and cares, go through the two hundred families of his parish? The most faithful pastors usually think they do well, if they succeed in visiting every family in the parish each year. There are few, having the charge of large congregations, who are able to do even this. If a minister does much more than this, it is pretty certain that he is neglecting his study, and that his congregation are complaining that all his sermons are alike. Any person, by a slight computation, may see the utter impossibility of a faithful minister's visiting his people with that degree of frequency which is generally desired and expected.

Having thus briefly considered the prominent duties of the pastor, let us now reflect upon the corresponding duties of the people.

1. The people should give their minister their confidence and affection. His character ought to be such as to merit their kind regard, and if he have it not, he labors unavailingly. When he enters the pulpit, let him be encouraged by the thought that the partiality of friendship will give weight to his words, will overlook those infirmities, and extenuate those defects incident to humanity. Let him repose in the assurance that if exemplary in labor and in life, his parishioners will guard his reputation, and uphold his proper influence.

Your pastor is to plead with you in reference to the most precious interests of your souls; he is to urge upon you the consideration of your sins; he is faithfully to warn you against every spiritual danger; he is to blend his sympathies with your own in your hours of bereavement and of sorrow; if you fall before temptation, and every friend abandon you, your pastor must never abandon you; he is perchance to stand at your bedside, when you are struggling your painful way through death's dark valley, and, when the struggle is over, he is to urge the consolations of the gospel upon the hearts of weeping friends in all the freshness of their anguish. And how can he discharge these duties if he have not your confidence and affection? It is not merely a mercenary tie which unites pastor and flock;—by which they pay so much money, and he performs so much work;—you expect more than the work. You expect, and have a right to expect, the heart of your pastor,—that he will incorporate your joys and sorrows into his own bosom,—that he will be, as it were, a member of your family,—one to whom you can ever go, sure of prayerful interest and sympathy; who, in the glad hour of the bridal, and in the weeping hour of the burial, can rejoice with you and weep with you. And he must feel that he is with friends; that to his parishioners he can unbosom all his heart, with no fear that his confidence will be abused; that he can speak with frankness and freedom, unapprehensive that his words will be perverted; that,

should an unguarded expression fall from his lips, kind charity will bury it. How happy the union when thus cemented! How wretched when blasted by the demon of disaffection and strife!

2. The christian pastor needs the constant attendance of his parishioners at the stated seasons of public worship. If it be his duty to preach, it is their duty to hear. Let him see his efforts appreciated, the house of worship crowded, and it will invigorate him to redoubled exertions. Hope will inspire his mind and warm his heart. But his energies are palsied, should he fear that if the Sabbath be a little too warm, or a little too cold, a little too sunny, or a little too cloudy, should the mist sweep through the air, or the beautiful snow flake fall, the empty walls of the church will send back in chilling tones the echo of his voice. It is hardly in human nature to triumph over such discouragements.

I plead not that the invalid should be imprudent, I plead only that the healthy should be conscientious; I plead only that the congregation be not a fair weather congregation—a Sabbath morning congregation. Comforts are now so multiplied that all ordinary weather may be safely encountered by all but the feeble or infirm. Let habit become nature. Come with your families, like Israel's tribes, to this spacious and beautiful temple. Go out into the highways and hedges, and invite guests. Throw open your doors with cordiality to the stranger, and let congregation and pastor be animated by the sublime spectacle of a thronged sanctuary. Be assured that there is no other way in which you can pass your Sabbaths so happily; there is no other way of employing these sacred hours, which will be so promotive of both the temporal and the spiritual prosperity—the moral and the intellectual improvement of yourselves and your families.

The sublime contemplations of the pulpit alike tend to expand the intellect and to purify the heart, to diffuse those virtues which grace the hours of domestic privacy and affection, and that sobriety, integrity and industry, which constitute the foundation of individual happiness and national prosperity. And it is thus alone that you can prepare for those fearful scenes of death, resurrection, judgment, and eternity, to which all are so rapidly hastening.

3. The christian minister must have the attention of his hearers. The difference between different congregations, in this respect, is wonderful. Here every eye is attentive, and every ear listening; there the leaden spirit of stupidity and slumber apparently envelops all senses. Doubtless much in this respect depends upon the pastor; still much upon the people. Fix the eye and open the ear, and the most phlegmatic speaker will be animated. Close the eye and send the mind roving the world, or lock it up in the gloomy caves of night and sleep, and the flaming zeal of a seraph would expire. If it be true that a lifeless pastor makes a sleepy flock, the converse is none the less true.

It is not in the nature of ordinary men, to study and preach with

ardor and with interest unless attention can be secured. If lethargic fumes pervade the house, he must inhale the drowsy influence. Attention requires effort. One must beat against the gales of worldly cares, and by vigorous struggling chain the reluctant mind to the presented truth, till habit makes the effort easy. "Take heed how you hear," is a divine injunction. Truths unentertaining may be infinitely important. Many subjects must be urged which it is difficult to invest with popular attractions. And yet in their discussion the mind accustomed to thought will find rich interest and profit.

Take two young men of equal capacity; let one discipline his mind to attention on the Sabbath, and the other indulge in listlessness; and at the close of the year the former will be decisively the superior of the latter in all the attributes of intellect. His intelligent face will show it; his dignified deportment will show it, and the voice of the community will attest it. There is absolutely nothing comparable to the sublime revelations of the gospel to exalt one in the scale of mental being.

4. The christian minister needs the cordial co-operation of his church. In all his plans of usefulness he needs their support. But most especially does he require their constant attendance upon the stated religious meetings. This church have established, in addition to the two services on the Sabbath, a religious meeting in the lecture room on Sabbath evening, and a lecture on Wednesday evening in the same place. It doubtless is the unanimous decision of this church that these meetings ought to be sustained; not languidly, ever dying yet never dead, but with energy and vigor. How effect this? There is but one answer. The church as a body must attend. Without this all other influences are unavailing. If they who love Christ and his cause, are neither impelled by duty nor attracted by desire to the evening meeting, surely those will not be allured who, as yet, have no acquaintance with a Savior's love. If the disciples of the Redeemer, in the weariness of ordinary business, or in the multiplication of worldly cares, can find exemption, surely the young, the thoughtless, the unrenewed, will not take their lonely way to the deserted temple. "I am but one," says the disciple, seeking to quiet reproachful conscience, "I shall not be missed." Let each one say the same, and every energy of the church is paralyzed. Scarcely can one find a more cheerless and depressing sight than a few individuals scattered over an almost empty lecture room for evening worship. The voice of prayer, reverberated through the desolate hall, sounds gloomy and dispiriting. There is not spiritual or physical strength to give the hymn a voice, and it dies unborn. This is truly the frigid zone of devotion. If one does not freeze there, it is because he has a fire in his heart so warm that the ices around cannot quench it. Would you convince an anxious inquirer that religion is but a heartless pretence, send him to such a meeting, and let him there inquire where are the church. But what sight is more invigorating than a thronged lecture room, in the sacred silence of the evening? There is an influence in

the hour itself, which subdues and mollifies the soul. The softened light, the still assembly, the gentle tones of prayer, the plaintive or the animated hymn, the outward darkness, the social sympathies awakened by the scene, all are conducive to the holiest impressions. And should the wind, admonishing of the gathering storm, moan about the building, or the rain or sleet patter upon the glass, those pensive emotions are still more strongly awakened, which ever wing the soul to explore eternity. Disciples of Jesus, you have few duties paramount to this. Let such meetings be appointed, as can be sustained, and make it a matter of conscience to sustain them. There is a dangerous tendency at the present time, to multiply religious meetings to such a degree that they are all thinly attended. It is a great and a disastrous error. Any meeting which diminishes the attendance upon the stated public services, so far inflicts a serious injury upon the cause of Christ. If the claims of business or family cares are such, that you can attend but one religious meeting during the days intervening the Sabbath, by all means let it be the meeting where the brethren are "with one accord in one place." Many can with perfect convenience meet in other circles of devotion. And this is well. But let it never be done at the expense of the stated weekly lecture.

And where can *any of this congregation* more rationally and profitably pass an evening hour than in reflecting upon the sublime truths of revelation,—the government of God, the duties and dangers and destiny of man, and the realities of eternity? We invite you all, beloved hearers, to meet with us, that we may together anticipate and provide for the dread scenes we are soon to enter. We have an equal interest in eternal realities. We are fellow immortals. We are fellow travelers to the uninterrupted joys of heaven or to the endless despair of hell. And it is wise for each one of us—

> "To steal awhile away
> From every cumbering care,
> And spend the hours of setting day
> In humble, grateful prayer."

And I do here affectionately and earnestly invite every member of the choir, to assist us in our evening devotions in the lecture room. You contribute much to the enjoyment of public worship in this sanctuary, and the congregation are grateful for your voluntary aid. We should love to hear your voices in the solemn hour of the evening, adding an additional charm to our evening devotions. And not for our sakes alone do we invite you. It is for yours also. We will hope and pray that you may all thus be prepared to unite with the heavenly choir, in singing the anthems of redeeming love.

5. I cannot in this connection forget the claims of the Sabbath school. This is peculiarly the nursery which the church must cultivate. The pastor ought not, and absolutely cannot, in addition to his other Sabbath day duties, devote much attention to the Sabbath

school. To this work the church should consecrate its best energies. There are few spots on this globe where this labor is more imperiously demanded than here. Many of the lads, now thronging our streets, are, for the time being, essentially fatherless. Thousands of miles of stormy ocean, and weary months and years separate the father from his bereaved family. Oh, how many an anxious father is now tossed upon the bosom of the Pacific, with heart more restless, perhaps, than the heaving billows which are his home. His tempest tossed ship and the midnight storm, could divulge many a secret of his frequent anguish, as he reflects upon his children, growing to maturity, deprived of a father's care. Yes! many prayers have ascended from lips, perhaps all unused to pray, as the anxious parent, true to nature's instincts, in darkness and tempests, is compelled to think of his loved and long lost home. The last words which a departing father uttered to a teacher of this Sabbath school, as he unfurled his sails for his long long voyage, were, "take care of my boy." And think you that father forgot his boy, as he passed the blazing line, as he doubled the stormy cape, as he pursued for months and years, his gigantic game over the illimitable ocean? Absent fathers, we will not forget your children. We will love them, and watch over them, and pray for them, and plead with them, and do all we can to train them up for usefulness and for heaven.

And how soon will many of these boys leave all the privileges they now enjoy, to encounter hardship, to brave danger, to endure almost every spiritual privation. The other side of the globe will witness their perils and their toils, and years will elapse ere they will again revisit these scenes of their childhood.

> "Their march is on the mountain wave;
> Their home is on the deep."

They are hastening to scenes of dangerous adventure, where no Sabbath bell is heard, where no church is reared, where no gospel is proclaimed, where all the precious safeguards of mother and sister and home are lost. And when temptations multiply and restraints vanish, what preservative have they but christian principle previously implanted in the youthful mind? And there is an influence in the agitated elements in the midst of which they live, in the storms which sweep around them, in the perils which ever threaten them, in the emergencies of difficulty which they must surmount, in the daring essential to attack and destroy

> "That sea-beast
> Leviathan, which God, of all his works,
> Created hugest which swim the ocean stream;"

there is, I say, an influence to be found in these scenes of the physical and the moral sublime, which calls into exercise the loftiest traits of our nature; which expands the soul and invigorates all its powers.

Let religion enthrone herself in the heart, and mould and modulate all these influences, and how blessed the result.

Many of these youth will attain eminence in their calling. They will become masters of ships, and stamp the image of their piety or their ungodliness upon large crews, almost totally under their control. They will touch at those islands of the seas, where feeble christian bands are struggling against all the powers of heathenism; where, as pious men, they may strengthen the hands and the hearts of our devoted missionaries, or, as the foes of Christ, may magnify immeasurably their discouragements and their sufferings. Oh, what a claim have these children upon the care of this church. No pains should be spared to gather them all into the Sabbath school, and when there is a demand for a teacher, each one who is capable of teaching should say, "Here, Lord, am I, send me."

Fathers and mothers! would you have your children virtuous, intelligent, and respectable? would you have them love and obey their heavenly Father and their earthly parents? would you have them taught to avoid all temptation and sin? would you have them comfort you, in their old age, by the excellence of their characters and their affection? would you finally have them die the death of the righteous, and inherit the mansions of heaven forever?—oh, send them to the Sabbath school, where they will be taught the law of God, where they will hear of a Savior's love, where the joyful and awful realities of the eternal world will be urged upon the mind.

This union, my beloved parishioners, into which we have now entered, must, at the longest, be short. Swiftly gliding years are hurrying you to the grave. One of my most solemn, affecting, and frequent duties will be to assist in the mournful rites of your burial. Already have I seen four of your number consigned to the tomb. Whose form will next be shrouded for the grave? From which of your dwellings shall the funeral procession next move? We cannot tell. But this we know. One after another, all your dwellings must be desolate. One after another, you must all die. It will seem but as the passing of a dream ere we shall all be gone; pastor and people, we shall all have disappeared from earth, and shall have entered scenes of endless joy or wo, in distant worlds. Are you, my dear hearers, prepared to die—to rise again—to meet your Savior at the judgment throne—to be judged according to the things written in the book of life? Have you yielded to the persuasions of the Spirit striving for your salvation? Have you publicly acknowledged your acceptance of that Savior who died on the cross to redeem you? Are you daily exercising penitence, and continuing instant in prayer? Are you engaged with all your heart in the attainment of holiness, and in the endeavor to lead others to the knowledge of a Savior's love? In fine, have you good evidence that Christ recognizes you as a disciple and a friend—that your sins are all forgiven, and that you have secured an inheritance with the saints in light? These are the questions the faithful pastor must urge upon his parishioners with untiring

earnestness. When death shall have palsied my tongue and closed your ears, we shall soon meet again. The fearful thunders of the resurrection trump will summon us. We shall stand together at that awful bar whose decisions are irreversible and eternal. We shall retrace life's transient yet momentous scenes, with inexpressible joy or unutterable despair. And should it appear on that awful day that your pastor has not faithfully delivered to you the whole counsel of God, or that you have refused to heed his warnings, it had been better for us that we had never been born.

Oh God, grant that in the morning of the resurrection, we may all be found on the happy shores of the heavenly Canaan, to hear the welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servants," and to "enter Zion with songs and everlasting joy."

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 5. Vol. XVI.) MAY, 1842. (Whole No. 185.

SERMON CCCXXIII.

BY REV. NEHEMIAH ADAMS,
BOSTON, MASS.

CHRISTIAN UNION OF THE HEART AND TREASURE.

A MISSIONARY SERMON.

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."—Matt. vi. 21.

The object of Christ, in this part of his discourse, is to show that inasmuch as our hearts follow our treasure, our treasure should be bestowed where it is most desirable that we should fix our hearts.

The sentiment of the text is confirmed by our common feelings and practice. In whatever object you invest that which is most precious to you, your heart goes instinctively towards it. Shrewd men act on this principle in their secular enterprises. When they wish to secure the influence of an important individual in their projects, they prevail on him to invest property in them, feeling sure that where his treasure is, there his heart will be also. We are all interested in an object in which we have treasure; we inquire about it, and read what is said of it, at every opportunity.

This being so, it is of the first importance that our treasure should be bestowed where it is most desirable that we should fix our hearts. For, the objects in which a man is interested give character to his feelings and principles. You see an illustration of this in a young man who has unfortunately become attached to low company, and spends his leisure time in dissolute and brawling resorts. He has put his treasure, his chief good, where it is injurious for his affections to be found. Another individual prizes useful reading above any other amusement, or devotes himself, in his leisure moments, to some art or science. In like manner we see his pursuit imparting its character to him. It was for this reason, and upon this principle, that Christ said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." As though he had said: It is infinitely desirable that

you should live for heaven. In order to do this, put your treasures there, and then you will be sure to think much of heaven, and live for it, and expect it. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.

Though the principle contained in the text is, perhaps, sufficiently illustrated for the object of this discourse, yet because it is an interesting principle, I will show its operation in one or two further particulars. Our feelings towards the Savior are affected by the treasure which we have committed to him. You, christian, have committed your soul to Christ. The words of scripture find a response in you, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day." It may fill us with solemn awe to think what Christ has engaged to do. You rely on him implicitly in order to be saved. You anticipate dying, appearing before God, the last judgment, and the final sentence, trusting only and wholly in Jesus Christ. Believers every where have thus given their souls to Christ for salvation. When men have a precious treasure to send from place to place, how careful they are about the manner of its transmission, and the character and responsibleness of the man who bears it. When a ship, with an immensely rich freight, is reported as missing, the feelings of the owners and of the underwriters are intense; and when the noble thing is at last in sight, their eyes feast themselves with her proud form and movement, and they almost thank and bless the unconscious vessel for bearing that rich freight in safety. We may account for the love of heaven and of saints on earth towards Christ, not only from his intrinsic excellence, but from their committal of such treasures as their immortal interests to his hands. If you do not love Christ, it is because you never committed your soul to him; if you had, you would love and worship him in proportion to your sense of the treasure which he was keeping for you "against that day." The reason which the heavenly hosts give for their adoration and love of Christ is, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Countless treasure is committed to him by all in heaven and earth who unite in that song.

Our love for the place of our treasure is illustrated by the feelings of an afflicted, weary pilgrim, here on earth, with regard to heaven. His dearest earthly friends have gone there. His home on earth is either broken up, or is robbed of its chief interest to him. The world has lost its charms; he expects and wishes for nothing which it can give. But his home is in the skies. There he expects to find all which he has lost, and to be perfectly like Christ. When that man reads of heaven, when he hears descriptions of it, his "soul longeth, yea, even panteth" for its courts. What is the reason of his interest in heaven above that of fellow christians at his side? His treasure is all there, and there his heart is, also.

It is my object in this discourse to show,

I. That it is desirable to be supremely interested in the cause of Christ.

II. In what way we may become supremely interested in it.

I. *It is desirable to be supremely interested in the cause of Christ.*

1. The cause of Christ alone is of permanent interest and importance.

The cause of Christ is the salvation of men. Christ has no other cause in this world. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." But it is not so much from any temporal inconvenience, or suffering, from which he would save them;—though "godliness has the promise of the life that now is," as well as "of that which is to come;"—it is chiefly from endless misery under the wrath of God. When the Savior said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" he expressed the motive of his love to men. There are many things of extreme importance to the welfare of men. Trade and commerce are essential to human happiness; but what if this short life be the only period of our happiness? The profession of medicine is indispensable; but suppose that a man prolongs human life, and the disorder which kills beyond the tomb remains in his soul, and the souls of his patients? The profession of the law is necessary to human intercourse, and to protect the rights of men; but suppose that the successful lawyer and his clients are condemned hereafter, at that tribunal whose judgment is the second death? The cause of education is important; but suppose that teachers and pupils fail to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, and their intellectual and moral cultivation only makes them more susceptible to suffering hereafter, and obnoxious to the displeasure of a neglected God and Savior? It is the soul in eternity which is the subject of supreme importance; and whatever our calling is, this should be our chief concern.

You will observe that when the cause or kingdom of Christ on earth is spoken of, it is not government, or commerce, or learning, or any temporal end which is meant by it; these are means and instruments to the work of human redemption, and this itself is the "kingdom of God's dear Son." This cause alone is of permanent interest. Every other interest will be swallowed up at death in the concerns of the soul. When a king dies, it is of more interest to him whether his soul enters heaven, or is shut out, than it ever was to know on earth how great were his dominions, his treasures, and his hosts. The heart of this nation is soon to be agitated again with the question which of her statesmen is to preside over her for the next four years. But let us suppose that the day of judgment has come, and the soul of one of the humblest of this nation is standing up before Christ, and the last decisive sentence is about to be pronounced upon him. We, the spectators, will feel that it is a matter of greater interest and importance what that sentence is, than who shall now occupy the thrones of this world.

There are several men in this country of whom the people are proud, for their accomplishments and reputation. The day is coming

when such men, unless they are holy, will be forgotten. You have kept a lamp burning through the night, and while it was dark, that lamp was the light of every thing in the room. At last it is day, and while you are moving about the room, you accidentally catch a glance of it. The lamp is burning and you did not know it. You had not thought of it for some time, because the daylight had swallowed up the light of it. So there are some minds which now give much light in this dark world; they are called the lights of the age; but when the morning of eternity dawns on the world, and—I will not say he who is the light of heaven, but when—angels and glorified men "shine forth in the kingdom of their Father," the minds which were highly esteemed of the world, but knew not God, will be as "a lamp despised;" and when they are put into obscurity by a greater light, they that were wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

The cause of human salvation is the only one of all those which interest and agitate the world, which is of permanent interest and importance. He who is in any way laboring to promote it, has identified himself with something which is to endure forever. He who devotes himself to any temporal object as his chief end, however desirable that end may be, will find that he chased a shadow. He that is supremely engaged in promoting the salvation of souls, is helping to build up a kingdom which cannot be moved.

2. The desirableness of being supremely interested in the cause of Christ, may be seen by anticipating our probable estimate of things when we are in eternity.

The affairs of men are all to be examined with reference to their connection with the glory of God. The exploits and the benevolent actions, the civil and literary efforts of men, will be scrutinized to ascertain the aim and end of their authors; whether it was to promote the spiritual and eternal good of men, or a mere temporal pleasure and benefit, without reference to the glory of God or the good of the soul. Weighed in this balance, statesmen and warriors will, many of them, be found wanting. The great novelists who will have contributed to the amusement of successive generations, and have been praised and extolled by them, will probably find that if they had each of them been instrumental in turning one soul from its sins, or confirming its religious principles, they would have some permanent source of satisfaction; but many of them will see in the light of eternity that their influence has been wholly wasted, as though they had laboriously and curiously wrought figures in the sand on the sea shore. A humble servant of God, in a poor and obscure town, who has brought souls to Christ, will hereafter be found to have done more good, and will be honored more in heaven, than a celebrated novelist whose works are the ornament and pride of modern literature. He, if unreconciled to God, will find his name obscured and forgotten, but the other will be had in everlasting remembrance.

In the bay of Alexandria, in Egypt, stood the tower of Pharos, as a light house. On the base of the tower the builder had inscribed the name of the reigning monarch in a composition which he knew would not last long, and underneath, deep in the marble, he cut his own name. The king's name soon perished, and then the name of the artist appeared, lasting as the marble. The names of poor and obscure servants of God are thus covered over in this world by the names and fame of worldly men. They shall perish, but the names of the good are graven "in the rock forever," and will appear to praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is better to turn one sinner from his ways than to be the most illustrious of mere worldly and selfish men; and this will be our estimate of things in another world. Every thing which we do, or enjoy, or suffer in this world, which is not connected with the good of our souls or the souls of others, will hereafter be as the chaff which the wind driveth away. All that we did for the cause of Christ will then rise to its just importance, its value will increase with the duration of the soul, and the unfolding scenes of heavenly experience and prospects. In the other world we shall find that this earth is of extreme interest to heaven as the place where the incarnation of Christ, and the atonement, made "known to principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God." Many who enter heaven will no doubt be surprised at the interest which angels and all celestial beings feel in this world. They will see the Son of God upon the throne of the universe in the form of a glorified man, and still conducting the affairs of this world wholly with reference to the cause of human salvation. If they have been indifferent in the service of Christ, and are scarcely saved, their feelings in looking back to earth, their embarrassment in the society of ministering spirits, of apostles and martyrs, and faithful Christians, will almost make them wish to return here and labor in the cause of Christ. But if they have been devoted to that cause, and their meat and their drink has been to promote it, they will be qualified to enter at once and fully into the interest of heaven for this earth, and will be welcomed and honored by the Savior, and by his angels and saints. It must be our great endeavor in this world to identify ourselves with the cause of Christ, and then we shall lay up for ourselves a good foundation for the time to come, and lay hold on everlasting life.

II. *In what way may we become supremely interested in the cause of Christ?*

The Savior tells us that we must put our treasure in it, and then our hearts will be in it also. The reason why any are not interested in the cause of Christ is, they have no treasure in it. You feel but little or no interest in those enterprises which do not involve your treasure. The reason why some christians feel so little interest in the cause which they profess to love is, they have never put much treasure in it. How surely a man will feel an interest in the school or college where his children are taught. His treasures are there.

What brings a certain family to the Monthly Concert of prayer for Foreign Missions, who formerly came but seldom, if at all? A son or daughter has gone on a foreign mission; the name of Ceylon, Sandwich Islands, Burmah, Syria, touches every chord of their hearts; they have a treasure connected with the Monthly Concert, and their hearts are there also. Now, if we would make the cause of Christ near to us, we must devise methods of putting treasure in it.—To be supremely interested in the cause of Christ,

1. We must consecrate our souls to Christ and his cause.

If we live for eternity, rather than for this world, we shall cleave to the Savior of men, because our highest hopes will be identified with him. It is a profitable and solemn question for each of us, Am I living for this world, or for eternity? Are my plans, and labors, and pleasures, and hopes, affected by the expectation of eternal life beyond the grave? or are they bounded by the limits of this short life? If we desire to find our final home in heaven, we must give our souls to Christ to be saved according to the plan of mercy revealed in the gospel, and we must esteem our relation to Christ more precious than any other relation. We shall feel this, if we are Christ's; for it is a natural consequence, as well as a requisition, that if any man truly comes after him, he will love only in a subordinate manner, father and mother, and children, and houses and lands, for Christ's sake.

But we are not believers in Christ, we are not truly looking for that city which hath foundations, and we cannot dwell in it after death, unless we have given up our souls to it, and to its glorious Head. You cannot expect to be an heir of salvation, unless you have embraced the way of salvation by Christ. If you have embraced it, you will prefer it above your chief joy. The first thing necessary, in order to have an interest in the kingdom of Christ, in which we all have some hope that we shall spend eternity, is, to consecrate your souls to Christ. The consequence will be, the kingdom of heaven will be to you the pearl of great price.

We must not think that religion consists in one act of submission, of repentance, of faith, and consecration. This is only the strait gate of the way of life. Many, we fear, regard repentance, and faith, and consecration to Christ, as they do a ticket of admission, which is produced and given up at the entrance to a place, and is not required again. Religion is not one act alone; it is supreme, continued consecration and devotedness to God. Have you given yourselves and all your interests, for time and eternity, to Christ and his kingdom? This is religion; and by this means, that kingdom will be precious to your hearts. Your first love for it will continue.—To be supremely interested in the cause of Christ,

2. Parents should devote their children to Christ and the cause of human salvation.

If we look upon our children as consecrated to promote the Savior's name and kingdom in the world, it will have a great effect in

making that kingdom dear to us. It will be infinitely better for us, and for them, to make this disposal of them, than to wish and to endeavor that they may have those qualifications which will secure the friendship of this world. "Know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity with God?" It may gratify us to see them flattered, and honored, and prospering in the world. But how shall we estimate these things in the day of judgment, and in the distant ages of eterinity? Then, to have been the parent of one who has served and glorified Christ, and promoted human salvation, will be more esteemed than to have given to an empire a king or queen. Labor and pray then that Christ would take our children and use them for his glory, and our habitual consideration of them, as thus devoted, will greatly endear his kingdom to our hearts.—To be supremely devoted to the cause of Christ,

3. We must contribute of our substance to promote it.

We have peculiar opportunities, at the present day, of doing something both to manifest and to promote our interest in this cause. It is the purpose of the pastors of churches to induce every individual to be a contributor, and to have personal application made to every one for a donation, however small. My present object is to show to every individual, the good effect of being a cheerful contributor to the cause of Christ.

The question before us is this: How may we become supremely interested in the cause of Christ? How can we devise ways of attaching our interest to eternal things? The answer is, Put your treasure there. Take something which is valuable to you, not a mere superfluity, but something which is of solid value to you, and give it to this cause. It may not be a great sum; but in giving two mites you may give more than the rich. The effect of it will be this: If you do it with prayer, and as an act of pious service, God will bless you for it. It will be a bond between your soul and God, to have given him an offering. Every one is a friend to him that giveth gifts, and so is God. It will give you an interest in the sublime and glorious enterprise of converting the world. It will enlist you as a co-worker together with God and with Christ, in the cause of human redemption. It will promote personal religion, if you do it from religious motives.

At a Monthly Concert in a small parish, it was found that some one uniformly contributed a bank note. It excited curiosity to know who of the people was able to give such a sum so often. At last, it was observed that a poor laborer, a member of the church, had improved greatly in his christian character and feelings, so as to be exemplary for his love and devotedness to Christ. He was found to be the contributor. His alms went with his prayers, and both came up together for a memorial before God, and God blessed him with rich spiritual blessings.

No one can prescribe to another what he must give, neither do we plead so much for large sums, as for a contribution from each indi-

vidual, in a right spirit, and for efforts at spiritual improvement in the act of giving. A female in Boston, in 1839, dependent on her daily labor, took one hundred dollars, which she had saved, and gave it to the cause of foreign missions. No doubt some would say, she was imprudent, and will ask what she can expect in times of sickness and dependence, but want and suffering.

I would not present this case as a rule, but I will say, If this woman had this alabaster box of precious ointment, which she wished to break upon her Savior's feet, "let her alone." If she did it with an irrepressible desire to show Christ her love and gratitude to him, I venture to say, there never was a happier soul on earth than she, in making that gift. There were in her heart emotions of love to the Savior, a consciousness of his love to her, of nearness and communion with him, accompanied with tears of joy, and a full assurance of hope, which no doubt made her wish to labor still more, so as to repeat her offerings.

We are apt to be contracted, short sighted creatures in our intercourse with God. We cling to our substance and hide it from God, when we might receive fruit from him a hundred fold, even in this life. Suppose that I take a sum which I had purposed to lay by for my children, and impelled by a sense of the goodness of God to me, lay it upon his altar with a cheerful, joyful heart. Suppose that it is ten times more than, in my circumstances, men would judge to be my proportion, and in giving it, I should say, "I ask no return for this; my reward is overpaid by the pleasure of making the consecration." I should expect not only to love God more in this world, and to love his kingdom better, but in the day of judgment, and in eternity, to experience a peace and joy at the thought of having done what God gave me the grace to do, which will be beyond all price. Let us act in this matter for the day of judgment, and for ages beyond the judgment.

Solicitors of contributions for benevolent objects, sometimes ask their pastor if they shall make application to the poorest people, who are themselves objects of charity. It might be asked, in reply, What have they done that they should be shut out from this inestimable privilege? Suppose that a Pharisee had met the poor widow at the door of the temple, when she came with her two mites, and had said, Woman, you are too poor to contribute; and had turned her away! What injury he would have done her! I tremble to think of the loss he would have occasioned her! Christ was in the temple, watching the contributors to the treasury, and she would have lost her Savior's blessing, her place in the New Testament, and the untold influence which her example, and the Savior's comment upon her conduct, have exerted and will continue to exert throughout the world, to the end of time.

I cannot but think that there was something peculiar in the history of those "two mites," that they should have been thus honored. Christ said that they were "all her living." Perhaps it had been

impressed on her mind that she ought to contribute something to the treasury of the Lord, and to do it soon. But she had only those two mites, and where should she get her next meal, if she gave them away? Strong in faith, and determined to do something which God should see was an expression of her ardent love, she bent her way to the treasury of the Lord's house. Little did she think what eyes were upon her, that the Son of God saw, and knew her, and her gift; or that, as she dropped her little offering and turned away, she should ever have any other reward for it than a good conscience, and the secret approbation of God. Amongst the spirits of the just made perfect, that woman has an everlasting source of satisfaction in thinking about her feelings and conduct, in giving those two mites. What will those poor church members say, who plead poverty as an excuse for not contributing, when they see her at the judgment seat? How will they justify their conduct to her, to say nothing of their Judge? Let no solicitor rob any poor person of the opportunity of being associated with her in her joy.

There is a divine threatening which is not often repeated amongst the warnings and terrors of the bible. It is in the fifty first Psalm: "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy fold." No expression of anger is more overwhelming than the refusal of a gift. To send back an offered present is to scorch and wither the soul. If God has a form of reprobation which he would inflict upon me as a mark of his peculiar wrath, let him shut up my heart from giving to his cause and kingdom. "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy fold. No stone shalt thou lay in that temple whose topstone is to be the signal of universal joy and praise; thy offerings shall not beautify heaven, nor make its music louder and sweeter by bringing souls into it!"

But some one will ask, "If I make an effort this year to aid the cause of Christ, will not the call be repeated the coming year?" Yes, and till heaven receives you to those pleasures forevermore, of which benevolent effort in the cause of human salvation is now a foretaste.

"But I am able to give only a small sum!" Happy, thrice happy, because of it. If you were rich, and gave of your abundance, you would not be so able as you are now to make an effort which you will feel, and which, if done with prayer, imploring that God will accept your sacrifice as a token of your love, will be a richer blessing than if you gave superfluous thousands. If every contribution could be the fruit of self denial, its good effect on the giver would be greatly multiplied.

If any one is disposed to sacrifice some possession or treasure which is very dear to him, let him be deliberate and careful in so doing. Unless you do it with something of Abraham's faith,—if you do it from impulse, or because you are urged, or because you are ashamed or afraid to keep it; in short, if you do it from any other motive than

because you wish to bind yourself closer to God and the cause of Christ, you may regret that you made the offering. But if you prefer to change the investment of that treasure from earth to heaven, from time to eternity, or to give it to Christ, who shall forbid you? The world may think you a fool. Let us, if necessary, *be* "fools for Christ's sake." "We walk by faith, and not by sight."

The blessing which Christ promised the young ruler if he would consecrate his possessions to him was, "And thou shalt have treasure in heaven." If we had more treasure there we should be more heavenly minded. Take from this world your love of honor and pleasure and expectations of supreme happiness, and the means by which you might procure it, and transfer them to the cause of Christ, and to God's right hand. Consider the kingdom of Christ and heaven as your rest and home;—send your treasure forward, and it will add to the future joy and blessedness of the place which Christ is preparing for you. Works cannot justify us, but they are the objects of reward; and by giving our treasure to Christ, we shall find hereafter that heaven is far more to us than it would otherwise have been. In this world, Christ and heaven will be precious to us in proportion as we feel that our treasure is connected with them. We think too little of the wisdom and benevolence of Christ in saying, "Sell that ye have and give alms; provide for yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in heaven that faileth not." You have had occasion of late years to pity some who had investments in worthless funds. No one, however, was ever an object of such pity under these misfortunes as they will be whose treasure will hereafter be found to have been wholly in this world, and none of it in any thing which will survive the destruction ef this globe. Our hearts are prone to keep our treasure here, and in turn our treasure fixes our hearts to earth and perishable things. Now, since we know that our hearts ought to be supremely interested in the kingdom of heaven, let us multiply our treasure in it, and then our hearts will be there also.

SERMON CCCXXIV.

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REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

"Oh Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years."—Hab. iii. 2.

This is a prayer often uttered by the people of God. When they are favored with no special manifestations of the divine presence, when they behold around them no cheering indications of the progress of the gospel, and, especially, when iniquity abounds and the love of many waxes cold, they are wont to lift up their eyes to the hills whence their salvation cometh, crying with troubled yet trusting hearts, "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?"

I need not tell you, my brethren, that *we* have occasion to utter this prayer. And we do offer it, both in the great congregation, and the more familiar prayer meeting;—I trust I may say, also, at the family altar, and in the solitude of the closet. But with what spirit do we pray? Words, alone, do not prevail with the Searcher of hearts. Do we properly appreciate the object we seek? Have we intense desires for it—such desires as prompt us to appropriate and efficient action? Do we pray in faith? Is there no lurking unbelief in our hearts, with respect either to the willingness and power of God to bless us, or—as we would now more particularly inquire—the desirableness of the blessing sought? Who does not see, that even a latent doubt on this last mentioned point, may render our prayers unavailing, and the efforts connected with them feeble and fruitless? No man will pray heartily, or labor with all his might, for that which he suspects is either unreal or unprofitable.

Now that most evangelical christians have full faith in revivals of religion, we rejoice to believe. Yet there are some excellent minds, we cannot but apprehend, clouded with doubt on this subject. They inquire secretly, if not openly, are these extraordinary social excitements desirable? Do the claims of the gospel change with times, and seasons, and circumstances? Are we not constantly bound to glorify God in our bodies and our spirits which are his? Is not the case of the impenitent at all times fearful; and is it not ever our duty to pray for them, and seek their salvation? Is not an even, steady course of feeling and effort, above all things desirable? Is not a

calm, noiseless, uniform interest—a gradual and constant ingathering of souls—rather to be sought than those intense popular excitements, by many prized so highly?

It is with an eye to queries like these, as well as with the hope of deepening the convictions of those who have never doubted, that we would now enlarge on the subject presented in the text. We need not detain you with formal definitions. We use terms in their ordinary and well known sense. With this understanding, we ask your attention to a brief argument for revivals of religion. We would suggest several considerations illustrative of their desirableness and importance. And,

I. *They are favored by all analogy.* We may refer, on this point, to the constitution and course of nature. Nay, even to mute and inanimate nature. There are, indeed, certain fixed and invariable laws, invisible as the Being who ordained them—laws whose energy is every where felt, and felt constantly. There are ten thousand processes ever going forward steadily and silently. The earth moves constantly and calmly onward in its orbit, and revolves with quiet regularity on its axis. Day and night follow each other in a changeless order, and the seasons deviate not from their long settled round. The ocean has its stated ebb and flow. From its perpetual exhalations teeming clouds are formed. By these, in due course, the fountains are replenished, and the streams, which are ever hastening back to their source. But in connection with these and other processes innumerable, in connection with those very laws which work often so calmly, what excitements has nature, what agitations, what stirring scenes, what extraordinary and unlooked for events! The river which was flowing on of late in quiet beauty, is swollen now, and turbid, and tumultuous, disdaining its old limits, and sweeping away the firmest and most ancient barriers. The "great and wide sea," which but yesterday was smooth as the polished mirror, seeming to him who gazed into its depths like a nether firmament, is to-day all in commotion, its billows high as mountains, and the gallant ship on its bosom "staggering to and fro like a drunken man." The landscape, which now lies in calm and beautiful repose before you, in clear and gladsome sunlight, may to-morrow be darkened by the tempest's wing; the voice of the tornado may be loud and terrible on its hills and in its vallies. The solid earth beneath our feet, all moveless though it seems, may the next hour tremble and quake, through some mighty subterranean agency, and in its yawning fissures threaten to ingulf us.

In all these illustrations, be it noted, we have in view but a single point of analogy. The permanent, the regular, the calm, the uniform, the immutable, do indeed abound in nature. But she has her changes, too, her extraordinary movements, her special and powerful excitements. They who, in respect to the progress of religion, are so fearful of the least departure from a perfect sameness—who would have the community feel now only as they will be likely always to

feel, and act only as they may perpetually act—who would witness no higher degree of religious emotion than it may reasonably be expected will be constant—find no support, it is evident, in the analogies of material nature. Nor are they countenanced by the ordinary course of Providence. Recur, my hearers, to those scenes of secular life, which lie open to every one's observation. Turn, first, to the retired domestic cirle. Surely, if repose is to be found on earth, unbroken mental quietude, and an even tenor of life, it may be looked for here. And, comparatively speaking, you do behold in the well ordered family a scene of tranquility. You witness, too, the manifestation of fixed principle, the regular, systematic, steadfast, persevering discharge of duty. But are there no excitements there? In connection with all that is permanent, is there nothing of change—with all that is old, is there nothing of startling and inspiring novelty? Are there no seasons of special emotion, and corresponding action, seasons when all the domestic affections and sympathies are wrought up to extraordinary intensity? Who does not know, that from the natal day of the first-born child, to the hour when the grey haired father sleeps in death, domestic life is all checkered with such seasons? Preserve a perfectly uniform course of feeling in the family circle—forbid all excitements there! Why, to such an end, you must shut out disease from your dwelling; by some strange sign on your door posts you must bid the destroying angel pass you by. There must be no parting scenes there—no intrusion of the fears and the sorrows, which, in the busy world, spring up in the path of the father and the son. Nay, their successes and triumphs must be unknown. You must banish from your fireside all holiday joys—there must be no rapturous greeting of long absent ones—no bridal scene, with its strangely mingled emotions—no prodigal's return from the way of folly and shame.

If we pass from the family scene to the great world without, the teachings of analogy are still more striking. In what department of human action, does life flow on in one still, unruffled, unvarying current? Is it so in mercantile pursuits? Is it so in political scenes? Is it so in professional life? Is it so in the artisan's or day laborer's humble sphere? Is it so with the rich, or with the poor; in the city, or in the country? Why, even the lowliest hamlet of our land has its occasional excitements. The most obscure and isolated husbandman of the mountains has the stir, and bustle, and unusual solicitude of the harvest, and the joy and festivity of the harvest-home. What important secular interest has ever been greatly advanced, without great and unusual excitement? By what means do this or that set of political principles triumph, either in our own land, or any other on the face of the earth where mind is free? How were the fetters of Britain's island bondmen broken? How were our fathers banded together in the triumphant struggle for freedom? And to come nearer home, how are important public objects accomplished in our own city? How are lyceums established, and rail-roads built, and state-

prison monopolies opposed, and public school establishments maintained or overthrown? How but by awakening general attention, by stirring up the people, by producing a special interest, an unusual excitement of the public mind?

Such being the general history of our race, and such their mental habitudes, in respect to all important worldly matters, why should it be essentially otherwise in religious concernments? The Former of our bodies, the Father of our spirits, the God of our daily life, is the God of grace also. If such facts and processes as we have spoken of, are of his appointment in one department of his government, why not in another? Why object to what are called revivals of religion, when in all nature and in all providence you are ever witnessing analogous phenomena? Are there not intimate connections between nature and grace, and important bearings of providence on the progress of the gospel? How reasonable, then, to look for the very analogy we have been setting forth! And how is our argument strengthened by the undisputed general fact, that the workings of the Spirit are perfectly harmonious with the laws of the human mind—that in all the operations of grace, man is dealt with as man—that human nature is not destroyed, but sanctified.

II. But we must pass now to a second argument. Thus far we have been endeavoring to show what method of grace might reasonably be looked for. We are able, also, to show what method of grace God, in his unerring wisdom, has actually adopted. We now remark that *it has been his course from the first establishment of his church on earth, to promote its interests mainly by special effusions of the Holy Spirit, or what we commonly call revivals of religion.* Says President Edwards, "Though there be a more constant influence of God's Spirit always in some degree attending his ordinances, yet the way in which the greatest things have been done towards carrying on the work of redemption, always has been by remarkable effusions, at special seasons of mercy."

There is reason to believe that such a season was enjoyed not long after the Fall, and in the lifetime of the father of our race. Of the days of Enos it is said, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." In whatever way this passage be rendered, it must be understood, we think, as indicating an extraordinary interest in divine things. Not that the truly pious had never been recognized as such, or that they had utterly neglected the duty of prayer. But the spirit of devotion was, at this period, greatly increased in their hearts; they became more separate from the world; they made a more open and decided profession of godliness; and began to assemble themselves together for the purpose of publicly calling on the name of the Lord. Now in all ages of the church, just such religious phenomena—an uncommon interest, especially, in meetings for prayer, and all public ordinances—have been regarded as indubitable signs of the special presence of the Holy Spirit. We see just such things in all revivals of religion at the present day.

There was evidently a special effusion of the Holy Spirit on that generation of Israel, who, under the conduct of Joshua, took possession of Canaan. Their fathers had been perverse and rebellious, and their carcases had fallen in the wilderness. But of them it has been well said, "There never was any generation of Israel of which so much good and so little evil is mentioned." The awful judgments they had witnessed, and the uttering of God's word by Moses, seem to have proved a signal blessing to their souls. On several occasions they manifested an extraordinary zeal for God; for example, in the matter of Achan's trespass, and of the rival altar, as they regarded it, erected by the children of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. And they had divers solemn public services appropriate to a period of uncommon religious interest, and clearly indicative of it. Of this description was the formal renewal of their covenant with God, by the whole congregation of Israel, near the close of Moses' life. Such was the second general circumcision, under the direction of Joshua; and such the writing and reading of the law bebefore a general assembly of the people, drawn up for that purpose over against the two mountains Gerizim and Ebal. Of a similar character was Joshua's conference with the chief men of the nation at Shechem, when they deliberately and earnestly repeated their vows, and a record of them was made in the book of the law of God, and "a great stone" was set up as a permanent memorial of them. Who can doubt that, in connection with all these transactions, there was an unusual awakening of religious feeling? That it was the true spirit of piety, may be fairly inferred from what God himself says of this generation, by the prophet Jeremiah: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase."

There was another remarkable season of religious awakening, in the days of Hezekiah. Mainly through his instrumentality, idolatry was suppressed, the zeal of the appointed ministers of religion was re-enkindled, and a new interest excited, among the people generally, in the neglected ordinances of God. That in all this there was a special interposition of divine grace, is expressly asserted. "Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people; for the thing was done suddenly." So deep was the public feeling, that after having celebrated, out of its usual course, the feast of the Passover—a protracted meeting of seven days—during which the Levites taught the people "the good knowledge of the Lord," and prayer and praise were offered, "the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days; and they kept other seven days with gladness." "So there was great joy," the historian adds, "in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem."

There was another signal revival of religion in the days of the good king Josiah. Early in his reign he began to seek after God;

and he soon became intent on the reformation of his people. No little progress had been made in this good work, when, by the providential discovery of the book of the law in the house of the Lord, it received a new and mighty impulse. As that book was read to the king, his heart was deeply affected. He sent to inquire of the Lord through Huldah the prophetess. He called together a great assembly of the people; and read to them the newly found scriptures. He then, with the whole congregation, made a solemn covenant before the Lord, "to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all their heart and all their soul." And so thorough was the work of revival, that it was written of the passover subsequently celebrated by the king's command, "Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah."

With this brief notice of some of the more remarkable revivals of religion under the old dispensation, let us pass to the new. Under this, as was to be expected—it being pre-eminently a dispensation of the Spirit—they became more frequent and powerful. The day of Pentecost will at once occur to you; and the "great joy" that pervaded the city of Samaria. Nay, what is the whole book of "the Acts of the Apostles"—the whole inspired history of the primitive church—but a history of revivals? At Antioch, at Iconium, at Thessalonica, at Berea, at Corinth, at Ephesus—in almost every place where the apostles labored—there was a special and remarkable effusion of the Spirit;—there were all the signs and substantial blessings of any genuine modern revival. Public attention was arrested—preaching was eagerly listened to—the consciences of men were troubled—deep religious anxiety was awakened—and from the lips of many a young convert burst forth the song of salvation.

If we turn to the subsequent history of the church—from the close of the sacred canon to the present day—how has the cause of God been mainly advanced, but by special visitations of mercy? What was the great Reformation but a great revival of religion? Who has not heard of the extraordinary divine influences which attended the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield in England? Nor were they the only ministers of Christ in the British Isles, who have been thus favored. It is an erroneous notion that in the history of the British church but few accounts of remarkable revivals are to be found. In the days of the eminent preachers just referred to, there were several other English ministers, not of their connection, hardly less favored than they. Such, for example, were Venn, of Huddersfield, Walker, of Truro, and Berridge, of Everton. Of this last mentioned servant of God, it is related, that under his own and the joint ministry of a Mr. Hicks, about four thousand were awakened to a concern for their souls in the space of twelve months. More than two hundred years ago, under a single sermon of a *Scotch* preacher

named Livingston, about five hundred souls were converted. Amid the mountains of *Wales*, there have been, for centuries, frequent and remarkable outpourings of the Spirit. Nor has *Ireland*, sad as has been her condition in many respects, been utterly a stranger to revival scenes. Of our own land, I hardly need to speak. You are familiar with its history. Your minds will recur at once to the great awakening of 1740, and to many subsequent seasons of divine mercy. You will call to remembrance what your own eyes have seen, and your own ears have heard, during the last ten or fifteen years—in the years *thirty* and *thirty one*, especially. And if farther confirmation of our doctrine be desired, it shall come from Ceylon, from the continent of India, and from the isles of the Southern Sea.

How evident is it that God's plan has ever been to bless the church and the world chiefly through revivals of religion! Shall *we* hesitate to concur in *his* wisdom? Shall we doubt the desirableness of what he designs and sanctions? How safe, how reasonable, how sacredly incumbent upon us, to give our desires and prayers the direction which God himself has so plainly indicated!

III. The clear manifestation of the divine will, is of itself sufficient to settle all controversy. But we have yet another view to take. We observe, in the third place, that *revivals of religion have peculiar power to develop and strengthen christian character.* Let it be kept in mind, that in this remark, as in all the preceding, we have reference not so much to the professed infidel, who denies all spiritual religion, as to the real christian, who has some latent doubt respecting revivals of religion, and who is inclined to regard a calm, equable, uniform course of feeling and action, as pre-eminently desirable. It may reasonably be questioned, *whether occasional excitement be not absolutely essential to the well being of mind.* It is with mind, in this respect, somewhat as with material nature. The ample provision, for example, which God has made for the agitation of the atmosphere, and the stirring and upheaving of the ocean, is not a merely arbitrary arrangement. It is wisely made; nay, it could not be dispensed with. Equally fitting and necessary are the arrangements of divine Providence for producing occasional mental excitement. The human mind was made to be excited. And, as with air or ocean, great evil must result from its falling into a perfectly stagnant state, or even a state approaching stagnancy. For this, it may be said, none will contend. But something like this would be the natural consequence of the utter absence of impulsive influences. For the illustration of this point, take as strong a case as the possibilities of human life will afford. Just suppose some quiet, easy, incurious, steady minded, even tempered person, averse to all change, suspicious of all novelty, fearful of all excitement, irresistibly inclined to do, to-day, just what he did yesterday, and making a virtue of his unbroken uniformity. Let his residence be fixed in some most secluded valley, whose repose is never disturbed by the hissing of steam, or the rumbling of the stage coach, or even the clangor of the postboy's horn. Let all ex-

citing objects be, as far as possible, kept from his eye, and all awakening, stirring knowledges, from his mind. Let him be ever a keeper at home; and let no agitating newspaper or magazine intrude itself there, no village gossip open her Pandora's box. Let him sit, walk, eat, drink, sleep, work, speak, think, and feel, in just the same manner, from day to day, and from year to year. What sort of man, after a process of years, will he be? Possibly your own observation, in some singular cases, may have the better prepared you to answer this question. Would you expect to find in such a person, as the result of such a mode of life, a full development of his powers—a high and vigorous tone of intellect—lofty aspirations—noble resolves—a head and a heart for great achievements? Would you not look rather for sluggishness and feebleness of mind—for timidity and inefficiency—for a sadly stagnant state of the whole intellectual being?

We have reason to be thankful, that so strong a case as this is seldom met with. The appetences of the human mind, as to the point in hand, accord, in general, with the arrangements of Providence. We are all constitutionally averse to an unceasing quiescence, and a perpetual sameness of life—just as nature is said to abhor a vacuum. The human mind craves occasional excitement, and it grows thereby. It is only thus that its faculties are fully elicited and matured. What folly then to decry religious excitements! Shall the mind be left free in the service of sin; and cramped, and fettered, and shriveled, only in the service of God? According, as special religious awakenings do, not only with the established course of Providence, but with our very nature, why should they cease even in the millenium? Nay, if mind be in heaven essentially the same as here, why should they cease even there? It is no presumptuous flight of fancy, surely, to suppose, that there may be, in a sense, revivals of religion among the blessed. There will be no need, it is true, of regeneration there; there will be no remaining corruption to overcome. But may not the spirit be aided in that eternal progress which is doubtless its destiny, by special as well as ordinary influences; by extraordinary seasons of impression and excitement, as well as usual and uniform helps and incentives? Was there no uncommon emotion in heaven, think ye, when the scheme of redemption was first unfolded? Finely and truthfully has Milton imagined the scene which followed its announcement:—

> "No sooner had the Almighty ceased, but all
> The multitude of angels, with a shout
> Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
> As from blest voices, uttering joy, heaven rung
> With jubilee, and loud hosannas filled
> The eternal regions."

There is joy, we are told—peculiar joy—among the angels of God, when but one sinner repenteth. What raptures must they feel, then, when such scenes as those of Pentecost, or of the Sandwich Islands

revival, first come to their knowledge! And when, at last, voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ," what an unwonted excitement—of delight, and gratitude, and love, and adoration, and all holy affections—will pervade both the angelic and the ransomed host.

It will further strengthen our argument, to consider in what circumstances, the most distinguished human characters have been formed. Where, but amid scenes of uncommon excitement and agitation? How was Napoleon prepared to grasp, almost successfully, at the empire of the world? How, but amid the strangely stirring events of the French Revolution? How came it to pass, in the seventeenth century, that such a host of giant minds sprung up in England? Human nature, surely, was of no finer or nobler mould than now. It was the age that made those mighty men. As every student of history knows, those were eventful and awakening times—times that tried and tasked men's souls, that evolved and wonderfully energized all their faculties. Great questions were pending, great interests were at stake, great conflicts were going forward, great achievements were demanded. And the human mind, as it commonly does, responded to that demand. It was so in the times of our own Revolutionary struggle. Men who in other circumstances would have been obscure, unambitious farmers, or plain country gentlemen, or plodding lawyers on some petty circuit, became known and renowned, the world over, as military commanders, or orators, or statesmen. And so has it always been. Great and uncommon exigences have produced great and uncommon men.

This general law of human attainment has a full and important application to the subject of revivals. They may be regarded as extraordinary occasions, both in the history of individuals, and of the christian community. They address to every renewed soul uncommon and most awakening demands. They are eminently fitted to arouse and invigorate all the holy affections, to strengthen and ennoble christian character. And that not merely on account of the direct divine influence exerted on the believer's heart, but by reason, also, of the exciting, elevating scenes in which he is called to move. The truth of these remarks, well known facts abundantly evince. We are doubtless indebted to revival influences for some of the loftiest specimens of christian excellence the world has ever witnessed. Not to mention other cases, a striking confirmation of these views may be found, if we mistake not, in the life of that eminent servant of God, the elder President Edwards. At a somewhat early period in his ministry, his people were favored with a remarkable revival; and not long afterward, came the great awakening of 1740. He was unquestionably a holy man, when set apart to the gospel ministry. Yet the attentive reader of his diary and other writings, can hardly avoid the impression, that he received great accessions of spiritual

light and strength, during the seasons just mentioned. And in those seasons, it is abundantly evident, some of his most valuable works had their origin. Some of his clearest and most powerful doctrinal and practical sermons were prepared for the pulpit then—those, for example, on "Justification by Faith," and that on "The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners." What a mass of valuable truth, embraced in his "Narrative of Surprising Conversions," his "Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit," and his "Thoughts on the Revival in New England," was he avowedly incited and aided by revival scenes to excogitate. And who can doubt that to such scenes we are greatly, if not mainly indebted, for that masterpiece of practical theology, his "Treatise concerning Religious Affections?" Nay, is not their influence perceptible, in all he was, and in all he wrote? May we not ascribe it to that influence—in part at least—that with all his acuteness and power of intellect, such childlike piety was blended —that in all his theological works, such keen spiritual discernment, such scripturalness, such a heavenly spirit, are manifest? Great and good, he might have been, had he never witnessed a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; but not, we are persuaded, as great and good as he actually was.

But may I not bring home the point in hand to your own bosoms, my brethren? Have not *you* experienced the potent influence of revivals of religion in developing and strengthening christian character? Have you not received, at such times, the deepest impressions of divine truth you were ever conscious of? What clear, affecting views have you had of the worth of the soul, of the sinfulness of sin, of the beauty of holiness, of the glory of Christ! The world is shut out, as it were, at such blessed seasons, and the heavens are opened. The presence of God seems almost palpable. It is manifest in the anxious countenance, the heaving bosom, the falling tear; in the smile of awakened hope, and the rapturous song of the newly converted. Every thing tends to fasten the mind on the things of God, and to secure the most vigorous mental action. Every thing is suited to elicit and strengthen all the christian graces. And when the special season of mercy has passed by, a savor of it is left in the believer's heart, and the blessed result of it is seen in his life. Are not the views and impressions of divine things, with which you have been favored on some such occasions, and which delighted memory still retains, the most efficient of all dissuasives from sin, the most potent of all incentives to duty? And who of us has not observed the happy influence of a revival of religion on the character of a church? What progress has been made in religious knowledge — what old stumbling-blocks have been removed — what new habits have been formed — what a permanent elevation of the standard of duty has been secured! More has sometimes been done for a church in a brief period of religious awakening, than years of ordinary influences have accomplished.

Such, my brethren — for it is time we draw to a close — is our argument for revivals of religion. They are favored by all analogy; they are sanctioned by the wisdom of God; they have peculiar power to develope and strengthen christian character. We have only time to glance, in conclusion, at one or two objections, which may still linger in the minds of some of our hearers. And,

1. It may be asked, *do we not favor a periodical, a spasmodic religion?* By no means, we reply. With about as much propriety might it be said, that in urging upon you closet devotion, with its special awakenings of religious feeling, we are sanctioning a fitful piety; or that in pleading for the sabbath, with its peculiar exercises and excitements, we are advocating hebdomadal paroxysms of godliness. We would not be misunderstood on this point. We would insist on a constant devotion to the service of God — yea, on constant effort for the salvation of souls. And in connection with such faithfulness, the morning and the evening dew, and the gentle droppings of grace, will be constantly enjoyed. But shall these preclude the more abundant shower? The more unfaltering our christian fidelity, indeed, the more likely is it, that special seasons of divine mercy will be granted us. Those seasons will doubtless become more and more frequent and glorious, as the church gives greater and greater heed to the precept, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

2. It may be said, again, *have there not sometimes been great evils in connection with revivals?* Undoubtedly, we reply. Unmingled good is unknown on earth. There is something of evil connected with the most beneficent courses of nature and Providence. There is not a single bounty of God which man may not abuse. The gifts of his grace are specially liable to perversion. The scriptures have been wrested to man's destruction. The Sabbath has been made an occasion of debauchery. The preaching of the gospel has proved to some "a savor of death unto death." Just in proportion, commonly, to the magnitude of a divine blessing, is the greatness of the evil which may be mingled with it, or to which human wickedness may pervert it. And this general law holds good in respect to revivals of religion. But who will say, it is wisdom, therefore, to discard them?

No, my brethren, harbor not for a moment, a paralyzing jealousy on this subject. It has no warrant in reason — none in scripture — none in your own experience, rightly apprehended. But be not content with a merely speculative reception of our doctrine. Stir up your hearts to offer acceptably the prayer of the text. Think, as you look around you, of the manifold blessings with which a general revival would be fraught. How would vice be suppressed, and public order be subserved, and all the interests of time be promoted! How would backsliders be reclaimed, and the hearts of the faithful be animated, and Zion put on her beautiful garments! What joy

would there be over repenting sinners — what joy in the family circle — what joy in the church! Think, too, how all heaven would rejoice — and how the glory of God would be promoted. And as you muse on these things, let your fervent and importunate supplication be, "*O, Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years.*"

"I AM NOT MAD."—Paul.

"THE husbandman labors from day to day, and from year to year, with diligence, with energy, with interest, with perseverance; men of other occupations do the same, for the *meat that perisheth*, for the fading, dying things of time and sense. Are they mad? O no. Every body thinks this is reasonable. But let any man be as active, diligent, and persevering to obtain the bread of life; and he is branded as an enthusiast.

The mercantile man journies, from east to west, from north to south; sails over every sea, visits every clime; tries the rigor of the frigid, and the heat of the torrid zones; braves all the dangers of the deep, and death, in ten thousand forms. And why? To acquire a fortune. His fortune is made. Will it save his soul? No. Should he lose his wealth, would that loss shut him out of heaven? No. Is that man mad? O no. Every body thinks him a reasonable, sober man. Let another be half as active and brave half those dangers, to lay up treasures in heaven, incorruptible, undefiled, fading not away; and he is branded as a madman.

Our country is invaded. Our rulers cry, to arms. The people fly to arms, meet the invading foe, shout, victory or death; millions of money are expended, thousands of lives are lost, in defence of a nation's rights. Or our government is insulted, the rulers give command, the people rush to the battle, and with equal expense of treasure and of blood, the insult is avenged, or a nation's pride defended. Are the rulers or the people crazy? O no. Every body believes all this consistent with sober reason. But, let christians be half as much engaged, with mild, and gospel weapons, to conquer the troops of hell, save souls from endless death, and vindicate a Savior's injured hon-

or. What then? Why then the cry is, Fanaticism! Bigotry! Superstition! Fools! Madmen!

A man is to be tried for life. Counsel is employed. Every point of law, which can bear upon the case, is sought out. The pleader makes every effort to bias the court in favor of his client. He feels after every trembling fibre, in the juror's heart, engages all the powers of sympathy, on the side of the accused. He calls up all the energies of his soul, and of his body too, and makes a desperate effort. Why? Temporal life is at stake! Is that man mad? No. All this accords with the dictates of sound sense and sober reason. And should he fail to do all this, where there was any prospect of success, he would be branded as a traitor, and a villain. But let a christian plead with half as much ardor, for his own, or his neighbor's life eternal, in the name of Jesus, and at the court of heaven, where he is sure to prevail; and he is called *a fool!*

A sentinel is set, to watch the approach of an enemy, and, in case an enemy appears, to give the alarm. He sees an enemy coming, but he does not sound an alarm. He sleeps, or is a traitor. He is adjudged to death, and his life is the price of his negligence or treachery.

The watchman of Zion is set upon his watch tower. He sees an enemy coming, and a dreadful and eternal tempest gathering. He sees the heavens gathering blackness, and the wrath of heaven just ready to flash eternal lightning in the sinner's face! He hears the thunder roar in peals, as dreadful as the voice of God. He lifts up his voice like a trumpet, sounds an alarm, gives the people warning, urges them to flee the onset of approaching vengeance; and they are ready to stone him, as they did Stephen. Who is mad? The watchman, or the people?"

MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL AT THE LAST DAY.

"Dear brethren, our office is no ordinary one. We are ambassadors from the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to a revolted world. Never had men committed to them an embassy of such deep and everlasting moment. No work ever undertaken by mortals was so important, so solemn, or connected with such amazing consequences. Among all the thousands to whom we preach, not one but will take an impression from us that will never wear out. The fate of mil-

lions through succeeding generations depends on our faithfulness. Heaven and hell will for ever ring with recited memorials of our ministry. And O, our own responsibility. There is for us no middle destiny. Our stake is for a higher throne of glory or for a deeper hell. For to say nothing of the souls committed to our care, our works leads to the altar. Our home is by the side of the Shechinah. We have daily to go where Nadab and Abihu went, and to transact with him who darted his lightning upon them. It is a solemn thing to stand so near the holy Lord God. Let us beware how by unhallowed fervors we bring false fire before the Lord. Let us not fail to devote to our work our best powers, our unceasing application, consecrated by unremitting prayer. Any thing rather than careless preparations for the pulpit, and a sleepy performance in it. Forget your father, forget your mother, but forget not this infinite work of God. Soon we shall appear with our respective charges before the judgment seat of Christ. What a scene will then open between a pastor and his flock; when all his official conduct towards them shall be scrutinized, and all their treatment of him and his gospel shall be laid open; when it shall appear that an omnipresent eye followed him into his study every time he sat down to write a sermon, and traced every line upon his paper and every motion of his heart; and followed him into the pulpit, and watched every kindling desire, every drowsy feeling, every wandering thought, every reach after fame. Ah, my dear brethren, when you hear on the right hand the songs of bursting praise that you ever had existence, and on the left behold a company of wretched spirits sending forth their loud lament that you had not warned them with a stronger voice, will you not regret that all your sermons were not more impassioned, and all your prayers more agonizing?—But what is that I see? A horrid shape more deeply scarred with thunder than the rest, around which a thousand dreadful beings, with furious eyes and threatening gestures, are venting their raging curses? It is an unfaithful pastor, who went down to hell with most of his congregation; and those around him are the wretched beings whom he has decoyed to death. My soul turns away and cries, Give me poverty, give me the curses of a wicked world, give me the martyr's stake; but, O my God, save me from unfaithfulness to thee and to the souls of men." GRIFFIN.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 6. Vol. XVI.) JUNE, 1842. (Whole No. 186.

SERMON CCCXXV.

PREACHED BEFORE THE GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION IN THE UNITED STATES, AT BALTIMORE, APRIL 28, 1841.

BY REV. RICHARD FULLER,
OF BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA.

THE CROSS.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.—John xii. 32.

That is a singular account given by Eusebius of the conversion of Constantine. He was marching, says the historian, at the head of his army from France, to encounter his rival, Maxentius, in a conflict upon the issue of which his empire depended. Oppressed with anxiety, he prayed that some God would aid him; when, in the heavens and higher than the sun, a luminous cross appeared, emblazoned with these words, "*By this sign thou shalt conquer.*" He did conquer, and ever after the cross was displayed as the banner of the Cæsars.

The truth of this narrative I, of course, shall not now examine. It is certain, fathers and brethren, and all important for us to realize, that, in the noble enterprise in which we are engaged, there is but one standard which can be upreared successfully—but one banner which, starlike, must sit and shine above our ranks, and lead us on to victory, and that is the cross—the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How exactly to the subject in hand is the prediction uttered by a prophet, and cited by Paul in the fifteenth chapter of Romans. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek." And although it is probable that Isaiah himself did not comprehend "what the spirit of Christ which was in him did signify;" (for a cross! a gallows!—even upon the vision of that most rapt of all the seers of Israel, could *this* have streamed as an engine for man's redemption, an ensign for the gathering and disenthralling of the nations?) yet we, my brethren, understand the prophecy and its fulfilment.

The very act, indeed, of the crucifixion, and the very hour, furnished remarkable proof, or rather a significant type and adumbration, of the influence which the cross would exert. On that day and witnessing that spectacle were present, in truth, the very "all men" (i. e. all classes of men) to whom the text refers; and observe the effect upon them. In the Roman centurion, behold a representative of the intellectual and sceptical; and what is the effect on him? He is convinced; he "feared greatly, saying, truly this was the Son of God." In the multitude, remark the careless and thoughtless; and what are their emotions? Roused and agitated, they leave the spot, "smiting heavily on their breasts." And in that poor thief—in his conscious guilt, his penitence, his cry for help, and the answer which at once dispels his fears, and sheds joy throughout his soul, and opens to him the gates of Paradise—see there the influence of the cross upon a sinner, its power to stir, and then to hush, the guilty clamor within him.

Behold the might of the cross as exhibited in the very act of the crucifixion, and on that memorable day when the Savior was lifted up. But was this power confined to that time, and to that place? No, my brethren. As Paul said to the Galatians who had heard the gospel, "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you," although Galatia was some hundreds of miles distant from Calvary,—so, wherever the gospel is now preached to a people, there the Savior is set forth lifted up among that people, and there the same influence will be felt, the same potency exerted. Still it is true, (and I here indicate the subject and division of my whole discourse) still it is true, that whatever the intellect of a man, there is an argument in the cross to convince him; whatever the heedlessness of a man, there is an energy in the cross to rouse him; in fine, whatever his guilt, there is in the cross a magnetism to draw, and a magic to change, and a mystery to save him. Let us resume these thoughts. I beg you, my hearers, to honor me with all your attention. And, "Oh! thou that hearest prayer," vouchsafe me the adorable succors of thy grace, and hasten the time when "unto thee shall all flesh come!" Amen.

I am going to consider the cross, in the first place, simply as an argument; and recollect, the Savior himself declares that one object of his mission and death was the assertion and establishment of the truth. It was just before he died upon the cross that he said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." And the apostle represents "the truth in Jesus," as the only truth that can really master the intellect of man, and make him wise unto salvation, because this alone converts speculation into certainty, and substitutes assurance as to eternal things, for those vague and confused and unsettled conjectures which may exist in truth out of Jesus, but are wholly incompetent and ineffectual.

Only "the truth as it is in Jesus" will avail, says the apostle, and

with reason. Why, just reflect for a moment—just consider, my brethren, what it is the gospel requires in calling us to be christians. It is to immolate self—it is to be divorced from the world, to renounce the world, to be crucified to the world. Renounce the world! be crucified to the world! And of whom is this required? of angels? of beings all soul, all spirit? by no means; of men; of beings carrying within them a thousand appetites, a thousand passions, a thousand propensities, and around whom are strewed from their cradles to their graves objects most seductive, and solicitations most refined and delicate. All these inclinations must be subdued, all these importunities repelled, all these fascinations surmounted. And for what? What does the gospel propose in their place? Things unseen; a world buried in the darkness of futurity; objects which the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Now need I tell you, that against this sweeping demand of the gospel there is not a taste or affection in the natural heart but will rise up in resistance? Can any language convey more forcibly the idea of violence, of a painful and protracted struggle, than the very expression, "crucified to the world"? And what more proper, then, than that the mind insist upon conclusive evidence as to these objects which are to "overcome" and displace the world? From what source, however, can this evidence be derived? From our senses? They give us no sort of information as to such things. From our reason? We feel that this is inadequate. From the books of philosophers? But—besides that their lessons are such subtleties as the multitude could never understand*—the truth is, the philosophers themselves felt but little confidence in their own reasonings. Socrates, when dying, said, "I am going out of the world, and you remain in it, but which is better is known only to God. I hope," continued the old man, "I hope there is something in reserve for us after death." Cicero confesses himself unable to decide any thing; and introduces one complaining, "that while he was reading the arguments for immortality he felt convinced, but as soon as he laid aside his books his belief was gone." And Seneca well remarks, that "the philosophers rather promised, than proved an existence beyond the tomb."

But if the testimony of the senses, and the decisions of reason, and the systems of philosophy are impotent for the extirpation of our earthly preferences and passions, where can we find that conviction which shall possess the ascendant power? Only in the truth as it is in Jesus. The cross is the only argument; but it is an argument all-sufficient—an argument so conclusive that no power of intellect can

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* It was expressly taught by the Platonists that none but the philosopher living in meditation could attain to the spiritual knowledge of religion. To him pertained the *episteme;* the people must be satisfied with the *doxa,* a compound of falsehood and truth. Hence the distinction between the esoteric and exoteric religion,

refute it, and so simple that there is no ignorance which cannot comprehend it.

Yes, my brethren, Jesus Christ "brings life and immortality to light." He comes "a witness to the people"—"to bear witness to the truth." And he supports his doctrines by his life, and vindicates them by his miracles. Bring forth, he says, your sick, your blind, your lame, and your dead; and at his bidding, the sick are restored to health, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, and the dead are raised to life. These were sufficient attestations, ample credentials, and ought to have satisfied all. These, however, did not satisfy the Jews. They ask another, and, as they themselves admitted, a conclusive testimony; and he gives even that. He seals his doctrines with his blood. And while evil men and evil angels are exulting in the seeming extinction of the truth, he bursts the bands which held him, and, rising, stamps upon that truth the broad bright signet of Deity confessed—of a God who could not only bend to his will, and at a word, the hidden mysteries and ministries of nature, but could invade the pale dominions of Death himself, and grappling there, and in his grave clothes, with the tyrant, could tear the black diadem from his brow, and wrench from him his cruel sceptre, and shiver at a blow his skeleton empire, and plant his bruised heel in disdain upon the prostrate monster who sought to detain him captive.

Oh, yes! dying and standing a mighty conqueror over the tomb, the Redeemer graves, as with sunbeams, the proof of his doctrines. It is impossible now to doubt. If ever incredulity was personified, and scepticism incarnate, it was in those men who witnessed the Savior's miracles and who crucified him; but, by his death and resurrection, Jesus, in a most illustrious manner, accomplished even the sign, and achieved even the argument, which they demanded. Of that death, and that resurrection, I will not stop here to marshal the array of evidence. They are facts incontestible. And if any man doubt, I cut the matter short with that man—he has never examined the subject. No honest mind can examine and not confess the impregnable stability of the truth. It is of great moment, however, to remark, that, these facts being proved, the demonstration they furnish is precisely as conclusive to us, as to those who witnessed them; for we believe, and they could do no more. The demonstration is the same to us, and wherever the gospel goes. The truths the Savior preached are equally proved, the doctrines equally established.

But these truths thus certain—these doctrines thus established—what becomes of the world with all its attractions? How is it dwarfed! How are all sublunary splendors eclipsed, shined into darkness; and all mortal glories withered, dimmed, shrunk, and spurned into contempt! Ye charms, ye flatteries, ye fascinations of earth, what are ye? Ye pleasures, ye riches, ye grandeurs, to which men crawl, and before which they prostrate themselves, what are ye? Come, let me estimate you now, let me see your worth, let me institute a comparison. But, my brethren, is this necessary? Ah! do not your

hearts already feel the force of the argument? What! will ye compare the deceitful pleasures of sin to "the fulness of joy which is in God's presence?" What! will ye prefer the stinted and polluted drops here to the torrents, the rivers of delight which are "at his right hand?" What! will ye lie down in hell, and become a prey to devils, for the gratification of a vile passion? All pomps and glories of this world, are they worthy to be compared to "the glory which shall be revealed in us," "the exceeding," "the more exceeding," "the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" To "see God;" to "be changed into the same image;" to "go to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem;" no more to know sin, and sickness, and pain, and sorrow; to be forever united to saints, and cherubim, and seraphim, shouting, "Alleluiah! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God; while the four and twenty elders fall down and answer, Alleluiah;" to burn with their ardors; to satiate the soul with their ecstacies; to be with Christ; to behold his glory; to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; to look into his face; to gaze upon his glorified form, and think that every vein in that body bled for me; to be ravished with his smiles; to fall at his feet; to cling there; to live there.... My God! where is the world now? What is it worth? Yonder, yonder is a world for which the christian Alexander may well weep; yonder it is, all radiant with the gold and glowing with the sapphire! But this world—this world which so dazzles and intoxicates us—this clay world, with its clay honors, and clay pleasures, and clay riches—Ah, Lord! how little were eternal objects worthy of the strife, if no better than such a world. And how foolish are we, my dear hearers. Is there a spark of reason in us when we love this world; when we refuse to immolate this world; when we hesitate to gather all this world contains, and trample it in the dust, that we may spring upward and heavenward, and grasp the undecaying glory, honor, and immortality set before us in the gospel?

Such is our argument; an argument convincing, and, as I said, of equal power in all ages and to all men. Wherever a preacher or a missionary goes, he may be a weak man, an unlearned man, but he goes armed with this, and by this he will conquer. Christ "lifted up" will be an argument to do what no reasoning, no philosophy can do—an argument high as heaven, and deep as hell, and against which no sophistry of earth, no subtlety of the devil can avail. The proudest intellect will confess its conclusiveness; and the feeblest, that of the African and the untutored Burman, will rejoice in its majestic simplicity. This is our first article.

But, my brethren, (and I pass here to our second division,) my brethren and fathers, were it doing any thing, think you, to preach Christ crucified, if the cross were only an argument? Were it not utter ignorance of man, to suppose that any demonstration will disenchant him of the world? Why, the argument may be overwhelming, and the evidence establish a certainty; but what then? What

is all this to one who will not listen to the argument, who will not weigh the evidence? What, in truth, my brethren, is the great difficulty we find in our hearers—and which the missionary, too, encounters in his? Is it to convince men who are awakened to eternal things? By no means; that were easy. No, it is indifference, it is apathy. It is that men are buried in the deep repose and lethargy of nature; that they are sepulchred in the senses. It is that in the polite, we have to do with hearts turned into artificial frostwork; and in the sensual with souls stupefied and imbruted; in short, that all are earth-struck—and that is worse than being moon-struck—that the care of the passions, the dissipations of pleasure, and the more fatal dissipations of business, its ceaseless urgencies and activities, engross the mind, and leave, as to eternity, only a heedlessness and listlessness as universal as it is strange and deplorable.

This is the grand difficulty. And, now, what expedient, what engine can be effectual for salvation which does not meet this? But what can meet it? What can rouse men from this fatal unconcern and callousness? The instrumentality, my brethren, to accomplish this work is still the same: it is the cross; the power is still in the same object, the Savior lifted up from the earth. It is idle to talk about what ought to influence us. The simple fact is, that preaching Christ crucified is God's ordinance to stir the souls of men, nor has it ever failed. Whatever the heedlessness of man, there is in the cross an energy to rouse him, a power which ever has been, and ever will be acknowledged. This is the second proposition I advanced, and one which does not appear to me to require any proof. Who will question it? Why, look at history; I appeal to facts; I appeal to the thousands of all nations, ages, sexes, temperaments, and conditions, who have confessed this energy of the cross, and yielded to it. And if there be, in all this uncounted assembly, one who has never felt any thing while a bleeding Jesus has been lifted up before him, then I know nothing of the human heart; let him stand up, I wish to look at him; he is more or less than man.

Never felt any thing! But it is impossible, I know better. No, my brethren, hardened a man may be; he may have a heart of stone, of steel; he may glory in his obduracy; but if he has ever listened to that tale of love and sorrow, he has not been wholly unmoved. No, no, no, it cannot be. We have amongst us a class of people who are always crying out, "No excitement, we do not want excitement in religion." Very well, let them get a preacher who knows nothing of Christ crucified in the heart, and says nothing of Christ crucified in the pulpit, and he will walk at their head, and lead them quietly and comfortably enough down to hell. The cross will excite. It is the most restless and resistless of agitators. No sooner was it erected than all nature felt and confessed its instigations; the earth heaved, the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, it agitated the rocks, it shook the sheeted dead from their slumbers, and disturbed the sun himself. Nor hath it lost its power. I care not what

the man is; let him be ever so desperate and wrapt in marble; let him be invulnerable to the most terrifying denunciations, and inaccessible to the most touching remonstrance; let vice fix her gorgon eye upon him till he be petrified and frozen into flint—I care not. He may be proof against all else, but when this tear-compelling story is unfolded; when there is mustered before him all the tempest which beat upon that sacred head, and all the love which welcomed that tempest for poor man—Oh! he will not, he cannot be proof against that.

True, he may bid away the holy feeling; he may quench it and perish. But he goes down carrying with him the bitter recollection, that he had been there—in that world, that planet—where the cross was, and had been touched by it as by a wand. He may stifle the hallowed movement, but it will cost him a struggle, and, for the moment at least, the rock will be smitten, and the heart will gush, and the unbidden tear will tell that all is not yet quite lost.

No, brethren, the unparalleled phenomenon exhibited on Calvary, eighteen hundred years ago, can never die, can never grow old; and wheresoever that is proclaimed, there men's hearts will be shaken; the strings, long silent, will be swept by an unseen hand; the wells long sealed hermetically will be opened, and the waters stirred to their inmost depths. I know not why it was that when the body of a dead man was let down into the cave, and touched the bones of the long buried prophet, it was quickened into life. But I do know that whenever this truth descends into the bosom—the conscience may have been long dead, shrouded and entombed in adamant—yet its potency will revive at the contact, and the word, although sown in weakness, will be felt to be an active and powerful thing, instinct with vitality and vigor. Nor when I speak thus, when I affirm this so confidently, am I at all regarding the ability of the preacher, though that is important. Nor do I refer even to the invisible workings of the Spirit, though these, I am aware, are indispensable. I am well aware, my brethren, nor can we too constantly bear in mind, that it is the office of the Holy Ghost to apply the atonement. I know that, as in creation this glorious Agent brooded over the elements, and wrought out, from discord and darkness, light, and harmony, and loveliness, causing the shapeless mass to burst into efflorescence and beauty—so, now, it is his, to move plastically over the chaos of principles, affections, and hearts, disorganized and left in confusion and ruin by the shock of the fall, and to reduce them back, and refashion them to order and holiness, and thus become the author of the new creation. All this I know. But I allude not at present to this. The energy asserted by the text, and of which I speak, is that of the cross, and in the cross itself.

And, now, what if I were unable to account for this energy? What if I should just say, that there is an electric chain which binds our ruined race to the wonderful Being who hangs there in our likeness? We are told that if two lutes, of the same form, and tuned exactly in

unison, be in the same room, and one be struck into melody, the other, though untouched by mortal minstrelsy, will own a kindred sympathy, and give out soft and gentle murmurs. And what if I should only tell you that something like this takes place: that when Jesus Christ assumed our form, and entered this world, and was smitten for us, there was a mystery in his pangs which should forever cause the sensibilities of human hearts to vibrate, and waken the play of feelings tender and unearthly? What if I should use the idea of an apostle, and say that, in becoming man, Jesus Christ took not on him the *individual*, but the *nature;* and that—as by this assumption he finished an atonement sufficient for the whole world, and became in this sense "the Savior of all men," and the sins of all thronged, and crowded, and gathered, and pressed in crushing and excruciating weight upon the sufferer—so, by the same union, there goes forth, there is sent back and abroad, and flung into men's souls, wherever a crucified Redeemer is preached among them, an effluence, a sensation, a sympathy, thrilling and irresistible? What if I should only say this—and the scriptures would bear me out—it were enough.

But, really, my brethren, all mystery apart, is it strange that the cross is invested with a power to rouse and shake the soul? Strange! is not the marvel this—not that men are moved—but that all are not instantly melted and subdued by it? Why, let men be only men, let them only have pulses that beat, and hearts that throb, and this simple announcement, "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life*"—oh! the very thought is colossal, it is overmastering, and language droops under it—tell me, can this be received with coldness and indifference? is it supposable, is it possible? And, then, the amazing consummation—the Deed! the Deed! the Deed! the tragedy of which this earth was the theatre, while angels gazed confounded, and the hierarchies of heaven bent from their seats in silent astonishment, and Deity itself, I had almost said, must for once have had all its universal regards and expatiations arrested, and fixed, and concentrated; that deed, that spectacle—can that be viewed with apathy?

What! my brethren, that "the Word was made flesh;" that "the Ancient of days" was cradled as an infant; that he, "by whom and for whom all things were created," stooped to poverty and shame;—are *these* things to be heard and have no influence? That, for us men, and our salvation, "the brightness of the Father's glory," he who "thought it no robbery to be equal with God," emptied himself, and took upon him "the form of a servant," and terminated upon a gibbet a life of pain, and tears, and blood. Oh, Jesus! IS THIS TRUE? Can I believe *this* and be unmoved? Can *this* fail to bow my soul, and wipe out every record from my heart, and live there alone, the one, single, all controlling impression, stamped in to the very core, and moulding every fibre to itself? Who is surprised at what a distinguished missionary relates? He was sent among the Indians, and

he preached to them with all his earnestness, of God, his power, his grandeur, and his glory; but they turned away and laughed at him. Why, they had heard far nobler sermons on these subjects than man could utter. They had sat down by day amid the wild pomp of their mountains, and the sublime silence of their forests; and at night had looked up at the pavement of unfading fire above their heads. They had listened to the rushing of the cataract, "deep calling unto deep," and to the music of the tempest, and the cry of the hurricane. Before their eyes the lightning's fiery flood had rifted the sturdy oak; and hoarse and strong had thundered on beneath them the might of the earthquake. They had heard THESE preach, and they preached of God in tones which mocked the puny articulations of human eloquence. And now that the white man should come to tell them there is a God, and that this God is great, and powerful, and glorious—they spurned at him in hardness and derision. Baffled in his first effort, the missionary changed his address, and proclaimed a crucified Jesus. He opened his bible, and read to them these words, "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*"—"*God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.*" Nor did he preach in vain now. The gaze of his audience was at once fastened. They were astonished at the doctrine, and their hearts were at once touched. As the speaker went on with "the faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation;" as he led them from scene to scene of the Savior's humiliation and sorrow, from the manger to the garden, and from the garden to the judgment hall, smothered sobs and murmurs began to be heard, until at last, when he brought them to the cross, and showed them, nailed there, the abused and suffering Son of God, and said, "All this for you; these tears, these groans, this blood for you!" the poor savages could refrain no longer; they had stood all else, but they could not stand this; they exclaimed, "Is this true? Is this true?" and lifted up their voices and wept aloud.

Sirs, sirs, men call me an enthusiast; but I ask you, is not enthusiasm cold common sense here? "What a pity," cried the Roman, "that we have but one life for our country." Which of you but exclaims this night, What a pity we have not a thousand hearts for such a Savior—a thousand hearts, and every one of them a holocaust, a whole burnt offering, a sacred conflagration of gratitude and devotion.

Nor is it only the overcoming fact of the humiliation and crucifixion of the Son of God that gives such power to the cross. From it what overwhelming truths flash out on a guilty world, as from a blazing, focal, radiating, central point. The cross! what an exhibition does it give of the value of the soul. The cross! what an admonition there of the miseries of the damned. Devouring flames, chains of darkness, howlings of despair, I need you not; the cross where Jesus bleeds to save us gives me a more terrific idea of hell than you can. The cross! what an awful lustre does it pour upon the justice, the holiness, and the severity of God. Above all, the love of God—how

dazzlingly, with what surpassing brightness, does not that shine there—sending a heavenly effulgence over all this dark world, down even to the gates of hell. I ask again, can this cross be viewed with indifference? Is it strange that the cross has power to rouse and stir the heart? Is not this the wonder, not that men are shaken, but that all are not melted and mastered by the very first announcement of a crucified Redeemer; and that whenever and wherever this truth is proclaimed, the scenes of Pentecost are not renewed, and the place is not a Bochim drenched with bursting tears rained thickly out of full hearts? A philosopher, and not of the worst school either, has declared, "It is impossible to love God." For my part, when I look at the cross, I say, How is it possible not to love God; not to call, with the Psalmist, upon heaven and earth, upon our souls and all within us to love and praise HIM; and with old Andrew Fuller,* to find our hearts forever breaking out into unknown strains of love, and our lips, go where we will, still singing,

"Oh! for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak"?

I ought now, my brethren, to enter upon our last article, and having exhibited the cross as an argument, and a motive, to present it in its most glorious aspect, as the wonder working power of God in converting and saving the vilest. I am not ashamed, however, to confess that I have undertaken too much. Ashamed! if Paul, if Gabriel were in this pulpit, they would make the same confession. I have no ability to execute what I proposed, and were I foolish enough to make the attempt, a failure would only be inevitable, but I should glory in it. "Young man," replied a great poet to one who asked him, "What is genius?" "Young man, if you have never felt it, I cannot tell you what it is." But if this be true of the inspirations of genius, with how much greater truth may I affirm, as to the transforming omnipotence of the cross, that those of you who know it not by experience, can never comprehend it by explanation. Say what I might, Christ crucified, while it is "unto them that are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God," will be "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness;" and, after all, you would only exclaim, "Ah, Lord God! doth he not speak parables?" Any terms I might use, although the very phraseology of the Bible, would be to the men of the world among you only a mystical and unintelligible jargon. And to you, my brethren, what could I say which you would not feel had been better left unsaid? I was much affected, not long since, in a distant city, by the words of a humble individual. We were receiving him into the church, and he was telling us, as well as he could, in his homely but strong language, of the change wrought

* See Memoirs prefixed to his Works, p. 48.

in him. At length he stopped, and, looking at me with a countenance expressive of the deepest emotion, observed, "Sir, I cannot speak what I feel; God, Sir, has not given a poor man like me the power to talk of this thing." My brethren, this is all I can say on our present article; God has not given a poor man like me the power to talk of this thing. It is this, my hearers, which makes the cross what it is; this which gives it an efficacy imperial and peerless; this, that it is not only a demonstration to convince the mind, and a talisman to kindle the heart, but "the power of God" to the salvation of the soul. Here is the great thing, the grand attraction, the might, the majesty, the sweet, though awful mystery of the cross. But here is just the thing that passeth man and angel. I say again, and the more I think the more I repeat it, what can mortal utterance do here? Where among you is the christian who has not anticipated my remark, that this topic must be felt, and is matter for faith, not speculation?

That for a lost world there is but one remedy, and this a specific, we know. We know that where Christ crucified is not preached, nothing is done for eternity. Much there may be of sublimity and beauty in the orations of the pulpit; but if Christ crucified be not there, while the imagination may be entertained, all will be to the soul only the beauty of frost, and the sublimity of the desert. This we know. But how the cross exerts this power in conversion who can explain? The emblem of the brazen serpent teaches us that the influence is inscrutable; and what can we say but this, that the cross is God's appointment to do this thing—it is God's ordinance to do this thing? Look at Saul of Tarsus! What aileth him there at the gate of Damascus? What is this internal and spiritual revelation of a crucified Savior, ("*in me*," as he says*) which in a moment transfixes that proud and haughty fire-soul, and beats him to the ground, and wrings from him the cry, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" and, riveting his gaze on a single object, sends him through the world exclaiming, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" who can tell what this is? Go to Corinth! What is this power at work in the church there, which, while the cross is lifted up, cleaves the bosom of that stranger who has come into the assembly, perhaps through curiosity, perhaps to scoff, and causes that unbelieving man to fall upon his face, awed, struck down by the manifestation to himself of the secrets of his heart, and there to worship, and adore, and departing thence, to proclaim the presence of Jehovah in the congregation?† Who can explain this? And who can say what is that mystery which, at a single look, can soften and disarm the most inveterate enmity; can unlock, as with a key, a spell, the soul, and untwist all the links which chain it in icy hardness, and break up all the springs and deep fountains of tenderness, and penitence, and love, and cause men to "look on him whom they have

* Gal. i. 16. † 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

pierced, and mourn as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness as one who is in bitterness for his first born." What is all this? I know not. It is a subject, not for discussion, but adoration. My brethren, I know not; I only say, "not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." I know not; I only know, (hosannahs to God for this! Oh, cross! cross of my bleeding Lord! may I meditate on thee more; may I feel thee more; may I resolve to know nothing but thee!) I only know it is so. "Then he stood awhile, and looked, and wondered, for it seemed surprising that the sight of a cross should so affect him. He looked, therefore, and looked again, until the springs in his head sent the waters down his cheeks." Such is the simple, but beautiful language of Bunyan, and it finds an echo in many a heart here. And I have only to wave my hand thus, and hundreds in this house would stand up and tell, with starting tears, of this mystery, this unsearchable wonder of the cross. Nor only you. Thousands in other lands, thousands of the heathen, who were yesterday enveloped in guilt and wretchedness, are to-day telling of this power of the cross, and looking, and wondering, and looking again, until their swelling hearts run over, and the floods roll down their cheeks. Yes, Oh! yes, thou wondrous cross! and might a sinner, who cannot preach of thee, be permitted to testify, I, too, Oh, my God, ("my soul hath it still in remembrance, and is humbled in me,") I, too, unworthy as I am, could speak.

My fathers, and brethren, and friends, I have finished, though all feebly, the discussion of the text. I am afraid I have detained you too long. I cannot help it, however, on such a theme as the cross of Jesus. In eternity we shall wonder how we could ever have begun to talk of any thing else, or have ceased talking of this after we had begun. It rests now with ourselves not to allow the subject to be without fruit, but to derive from it the lessons it imparts. The words upon which we have been meditating are not isolated. They are selected from a passage which portrays as formidable indeed the engagement before us, the struggle to which, as a body, we are pledged and enlisted. "Now," says the Savior, "is the judgment of this world." What a conflict! Wherever, then, superstition, and sin, and darkness reign, the gospel is to confront and assail them, and that, too, in a war of extermination. We wage with "the rulers of the darkness of this world" a contest glorious indeed, but how arduous! Let us gird ourselves with a courage worthy of such a cause; and wrestle, and strive, and strike, like men who feel within them celestial promptings, and in whose ears are ringing the acclamations of heaven, and the shout of the King himself, "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It was said of Julius Cæsar, "*Eodem animo scripsit quo bellavit*"—"*He wrote with as much spirit as he fought.*" Let the reverse of this be true as to us. Let us fight with as much spirit as we write, and speak, and pass resolutions, and what shall we not accomplish? Nor is the warfare a doubtful one. "Now," the Redeemer adds, "shall the prince of this world be cast out." Where this gospel goes

Satan's throne is broken, his kingdom subverted, and a blow dealt which resounds throughout the borders of his dominions. How much has already been accomplished, and how swiftly, even while I speak, prophecy is leaping into fulfilment, you require not me to say. What hath not God already wrought! Beneath the stormy tides and agitated elements of passion, how, age after age, hath a strong and pure under current been silently propelling the enterprise of heaven. What changes have not been already effected by the simple ministry of the truth—changes more astonishing than all the revolutions achieved by fleets and armies. And now, this day, every wave rolls and every wind wafts us the news of fresh and glorious conquests by our Emanuel, "riding prosperously because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness." This is one lesson to be derived from our subject.

But, my brethren—while by the whole passage we are taught this lesson, while we are instructed there as to the combat to which we are championed, and hear there the cry to battle pealing out from the gospel of peace, to battle for truth and man and God, and hail there the certain triumph—let us fix our eyes intently on the text as the cynosure of our hopes, and learn from that what is the only engine by which we can conquer, the only weapon which is "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,"—I mean the cross—Christ lifted up from the earth to draw all men unto him. "Every battle of the warrior," says Isaiah, "is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire." Only the silent, melting, subduing energy of the cross can succeed. Forget this, employ man's wisdom, and defeat awaits us, confusion will overwhelm us. But use this instrumentality, and before its almightiness Satan shall fall from heaven like lightning, and there can stand no resistance, there shall avail no enchantment of earth, no stratagem, no divination of hell, against Israel. "Let the heathen rage, and the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed"—they "imagine a vain thing," if the cross be there. Let the banded might of numbers oppose—God is in the midst of us, we shall not be moved if the cross be there; "the Lord of hosts is with us, he will be exalted among the heathen, he will be exalted in the earth." In a word, let the night which like a pall covers a nation be ever so thick and palpable, let idolatry overshadow a people until it sweeps in its dismal train, every star from out their sky; if the cross go there, its radiance will pierce the gloom, its beams will dissipate the darkness. This is another lesson taught by the subject. Do we not need it, my brethren? Has the preaching Christ crucified, that prominence in our modern scheme of missionary operations, which it had in the system of the apostles? I ask, with humility, are we sufficiently imbued with this lesson?

And are we sufficiently mindful of another, and the last lesson I notice, as to be gathered from our subject, and which more particularly regards ourselves? I allude to the necessity of our living al-

ways near the cross, and drinking deeply and perpetually its hallowing inspirations. Brethren, that christians in these days are what, alas, most of them are—that the atonement affects them so feebly—is owing, not to that atonement's being now too common a topic, but to our contemplating it too little. How intense—still and soft, yet severely, sublimely intense—is the efficacy of the cross of Christ, where its entire, unlimited influence is permitted. For my part, says the apostle, "I am crucified by it to the world, and the world to me." It "constrains me." O, let it crucify us; let it constrain us. The word "*constrain*" is, in the original, so powerfully energetical, so rich in expressiveness, that it is difficult to decide between several meanings, all equally just and beautiful. Nor am I going to decide. I choose rather to unite them all, and on them found my closing exhortation.

Does the term often signify "*transport?*" Let us adopt this meaning, and then let the cross transport us. Hear Paul, in a sort of ecstacy, crying out, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." Listen to one of the early christians who says, "to me it is much more bitter to offend Christ than to be tormented in hell;" and to another who declares, "I say the truth, if on one hand I saw the pains of hell, and on the other the horror of sinning against the love of Jesus, and I must be plunged in one, I would choose the pains of hell, I could never sin against this love." My brethren, you are perhaps staggered at these exclamations; but these men spake just what they felt. They were transported, they were ravished, they were "beside themselves unto God." And what they felt we should feel; there are holy ecstacies of love which we should know. If the word signify "transport," then let the cross transport us.

But the terms mean also, "*surround and urge on every side.*" Let us adopt this meaning, and then let the love of a crucified Savior surround us. Let it be the circumambient atmosphere we breathe, and in which our souls are steeped; the all-penetrating, all-pervading, all-animating, all-inflaming motive. What motive like this to kindle our languid affection; much forgiven and yet but little love! My soul, can this be possible? What motive like this to deracinate the wretched selfishness of our nature; why does he die? why, but that "they who live, should live no more to themselves, but to him who gave himself for them"? Where such a motive to fortify us with holy endurance of hardness? Have the members any thing to do with roses, while the head is crowned with thorns? In short, what an incentive here to the noblest charity. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich." Do ye know this grace, my brethren? do ye study this grace? do ye feel this grace? Then you need nothing else to preach charity to you. Look at the cross! O ye that hear me this night, behold the man! behold how he loves you! there, there is a charity sermon for you!

Ah, listen to it, listen to it. Give him love for love, charity for charity, sacrifice for sacrifice, heart for heart—give him every thing, for he gave more than every thing for you. Yes, if the word means "surround," let the love of Christ surround us; let it compass and press us on every side with a sweet but resistless violence.

Lastly, the import of the term may be, and literally is, "*Unite.*" Let us adopt this meaning, and then let, oh! let the love of Christ unite us. "Who," asks the Apostle, "shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" And I—I exclaim, with equal confidence, who, what, shall separate us from each other, united as we are by this love? What shall separate us? Shall persecution? No, that will only bind us closer. Shall the feuds by which in this world society is torn, and even members of the same family armed and exasperated against each other—sectional jealousies, and political rancor, and party malignity? No, the cross which lifted the Savior from the earth, lifts us high above these petty tumults and distractions. What then?—what shall separate us? Internal strife, intestine dissension? God forbid. No my brethren, I am persuaded better things of you. No, never, never, never; it cannot be. No, by our common toils and sufferings as Baptists: by the venerable men who sang together over the cradle of this convention—those whose reverend forms I still see lingering fondly here—and those who this night, it is no presumption to believe, are beholding us with ineffable concern even from their thrones in glory: by the blood which cements us, and the new commandment written in that blood: by the memory and love of him who hath bound us together with ties indissoluble and eternal, and who is now in our midst showing his wounds, his hands, his feet, his side, his head, and saying, "As I loved you, even so ought ye to love one another:" by all the glorious recollections of the past, and by all the more glorious anticipations of the future, this must not, will not, shall not, cannot be.

But my heart is too full. I must stop. My tears will not allow me to say many things I had wished to say. My feelings choke my utterance. Let me only repeat the apostle's words, "The love of Christ constraineth us." Let me only renew the exhortation, Get nearer the cross, live nearer the cross. Then no discord can interrupt our union, no troublesome birds of prey disconcert our sacrifice. "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." Let us take our stand there too, and we shall never want zeal, we can never lack devotion to the Savior, and love for each other. Nor is it long that we have to be here, and to do for Jesus. Where is Crawford? I seek in vain for his familiar face among you. Where is Knowles? It seems to me but yesterday that I was addressing many of you, and he was there, his countenance beaming with intelligence and affection. Where is he now? I look around, but I miss him to-night. And to-morrow, my brothers and fathers, where shall you and I be? To-morrow, we too shall be missed. To-

morrow the place that knows us shall know us no more. To-morrow we shall die, and the throne be piled for judgment, and we ourselves standing at the foot of the awful tribunal. Let us act in view of that hour. Let us listen to the voice which comes to each of us this night from heaven, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." My brethren, my very dear brethren, have we been faithful? Each of us can say, "I know whom I have believed, and that he will keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Can Jesus say, as to each of us, I know whom I have believed, and that he has been faithful to the trust which I have committed to him? O, let not the sin of perfidy rest longer upon us. Let not neglected duties and broken vows cry longer to heaven against us. Let not our works be longer "found unperfected before God."

Even so, Amen. O God the Father, hasten that time! O Holy Ghost, inspire us with something worthy of the name of zeal in such a cause! O glorious Shiloh, unto thee let "the gathering of the people be!" Let thy kingdom come! "For thine is the kingdom, and thine the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; all that is in heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head over all; and blessed be thy holy name, and let the whole earth be filled with thy glory. Amen, and Amen."

SERMON CCCXXVI.

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THE EVILS AND THE REMEDY OF COVETOUSNESS.

"And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." —LUKE xii. 15.

COVETOUSNESS is originally and essentially a disease of the heart. It is one of the fundamental, generic, bad dispositions of men.—Hence, the broad and crowning precept of the divine law is, "Thou shalt not covet." This is forcible upon men every where, and at all times, because men every where, and at all times, are selfish and grasping beings. They are not satisfied in keeping down to their own competency: what is worse, they are not willing sometimes that their neighbor should retain and enjoy his. It is well then that our Savior gave us the caution, and made it emphatic as he did. "Take heed and beware of covetousness," because it is essentially an evil disposition, and because many and great evils grow out of the indulgence of it. But to go more into particulars, let me say,

1. In the first place, *that the very word which our Savior used to express covetousness*, is itself a vivid description of the essential evil of the disposition. It is composed of two Greek terms which mean to have more; and the comparison may be regarded as twofold. 1. Have more than I now have, a sordid thirst of gain, increasing with the increase of wealth, and still louder crying, more, more. 2. Have more than another; this is another exposition of the lust of gain; the desire often being, to have more than another; with many undoubtedly the main strength of the desire lies in this comparison. Of course, the lust or disposition, in these cases, is one gross, standing violation of the law of God—the embodied sentiment of the second table—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Covetousness is putting up self and drawing in to self at the expense of others. It is not only a wicked disposition, in this view, it is a dishonorable, an ungenerous disposition; a sordid desire to go beyond and outdo our neigbors in outward, empty, factitious things; a contemptible emulation in mere matters of show.

2. *As a deceptive insinuating disposition*, there is great force in the caution, "*Beware* of covetousness." It grows so insensibly upon a

person, it gets a deep hold before he has any suspicion of its presence. It has many pleas to advance in exculpation. It can feed itself on the pure word of God, especially with the help of a little false interpretation. There is that very *clear* passage, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men;" and there is that very *strong* passage, "He that provideth not for his own, especially for those of his own household, has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Who does not recoil from being *worse* than an infidel? By such passages, wrested and wrongly interpreted, do men sanctify their worldliness and sordidness; and if they forget all the rest of the bible, they are careful not to forget these texts; they are sticklers for obedience here.

There is another cloak covetousness gets under, and seems very pious in its most sordid and broadest graspings. "True, we are worldly; we show great eagerness for wealth; but our object is to do good in the end; when the Lord helps us to a great estate, then we mean to do magnificently for his cause." Specious here on earth, but utterly hateful in the sight of heaven, I have no doubt. But so it is: under such pleas, this evil disposition gets into good men, and feeds, and entrenches itself in its obnoxious possession, with the very argument of religion. But, notwithstanding the place it sometimes occupies, it may be remarked,

3. That in all cases, *it is a debasing, degrading disposition.* It circumscribes, limits, and bears down the soul, "making it all earth and dirt." It proceeds upon an utterly false estimate, an estimate by which the outward and animal is exalted and kept in view; but the inward, the spiritual, the eternal, depressed and hidden. It perverts and goes counter to the maxim of Christ, which says, "that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth;" his true happiness and worth lie not at all in these; but altogether in the mind, the heart, the character, the eternal prospect. The covetous man places them in the former, and as he regards only time and sense, lives for the outward and the animal, he necessarily goes downward in character and dignity; puts off, as much as he can, the attributes of religion and immortality, and grovels toward the animal. His very heart and homage are given to the things he sees and seeks and handles.

It is an unerring voice which declares "covetousness to be idolatry."

The covetous man is an idolater, though in a christian country, frequenter of a christian temple, member of a christian church;—an idolater as he stands in the house of God—pronounced so by the great Being before whom he stands. Can anything more be added to this conception of debasement? Have we not reached the climax on this point in the inspired declaration, "covetousness is idolatry"? But there is more to be said on other points; as,

4. It is a *troublesome, harassing disposition.* It is necessarily so, because the individual places his highest hopes in that which is uncertain, changing, perishable. He is at the mercy of these outward things; all fluctuations agitate him, all disappointments corrode him,

all losses torment him. Being so wrapt up in, and essentially identified with material things, when these are shattered and go asunder, as they will, in the overturnings and convulsions of the divine providence, in the breaking up of these, he himself is, as it were, broken all to pieces. In a stormy world like this, whoever puts his all upon a wave, to the care of the elements, cannot possibly be a peaceful and happy man, except as, now and then, in the gentle, prosperous undulations, golden reflections strike his vision. But there is a weightier consideration in reserve.

5. *It is a tempting disposition.* It is the prolific root of a great variety of wrong affections and wrong practices. The apostle Paul goes so far as to say, that it is the root of all evil; and there can be no doubt that the apostle is right. Pride, envy, malignity, and other wrong feelings, grow out of this disposition. The wrong actions it prompts to are more than can be named. Even a heathen writer has exclaimed, "Oh, cursed thirst of gold! what canst thou not influence the hearts of men to perpetrate!" Indeed, what has it not done? No crimes have been too great for it. It has put the knife to a brother's throat: it has extorted labor without remuneration, and trodden the helpless beneath the iron hoof of oppression. It leads men to disregard the holy Sabbath; they secularize God's day; they trample on it in their heated chase of gain. It instigates all kinds of falsehood; running up and running down; hollow pretences and unmeaning promises. It instigates overreaching and undermining, anything that will decently break off a portion from a neighbor's estate, and add it on to my own. It leads to *kinds* of business which are a curse to the community; which blast character, and bury hopes, and break hearts, and desolate hearths. It leads to *modes* of business, which are not reconcilable with the law of God, nor even with a tolerable morality. Indeed, if a person allows this disposition, lets *it* dictate, and *he* follows, he knows not where he will go, what he will do, nor what he will be. It comes very obvious to say,

6. In the sixth place, that it is a *perilous disposition;* perilous even to character in this world. Thousands, under its sordid dictations, have made shipwreck of their good name. They did not *mean to*, but they *did.*

It is especially perilous to the soul. Nothing on earth, perhaps, so stands in the way of a man's salvation. It fills the soul with earthly affections, crowding out all heavenward movement; it overwhelms the soul with a world of cares; distracts and rends it with thronging perplexities; absorbs and holds in this unworthy direction the whole power of thought; the world before him, the world around him, the world within him, in very nature amalgamate with the world, he is hardly a salvable being. He may be in the way to become a rich man, but not a redeemed man. He may be successfully working out wealth, he is also surely and disastrously working out perdition. Oh! this ungoverned lust of gain, how exceedingly dangerous! What innumerable and dreadful falls is it destined to occasion, from the high

places of respect and opulence here, to everlasting shame and contempt hereafter.

There are other arguments of a positive kind, which go to enforce the Savior's caution, but we must pass them by. There are considerations of a negative sort that have weight, such as, that it is a preventive of good. It wonderfully stands in the way of good, which, but for this, would be cheerfully and nobly done. It withholds persons from doing good with their time. They have so many worldly engagements, and they are so profitable, that they cannot afford the time which is required for God's service. It keeps them from doing good with their property. They withhold often from God's cause, not because they cannot spare it and do without it, but because they love it; and what property is given to help on God's cause, often goes so reluctantly, that the happiness, the whole sweet blessedness of giving is absolutely lost; and what, according to Christ, should go from the hands with the heart's joy, goes really with the heart's grudging and grief.

In view of all these things, we cannot wonder that the bible abounds with warnings, and cautions, and prohibitions against a disposition so fruitful of evil, so preventive of good.

Nor can we wonder that *the providence of God is so significantly employed* in giving emphasis to that word, "Take heed and beware of covetousness." It is well to look at what God does, as well as what he says. What he does, both interprets and impresses what he says. When God simply speaks a truth, and it remains a long time only a spoken truth, men begin to think that he does not mean any thing by it. But when he comes forth and *acts* it, they alter their mind, and acknowledge that there is something in it. So in this matter of covetousness. Have we not heard God's voice? Have we not seen his significant retribution? He has been revealing it for sometime past on a large scale—a scale commensurate with the prevalence and rampant madness of the sin. Men, all over the land, have been strangely excited and fevered with covetousness. They have been rushing in great masses, vehemently rushing upon the thick bosses of God's word—upon the sharp points of those declarations: "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house." Upon these and similar texts have men been rushing, and they have been thrown back, covered with blood and shame. The divine providence has come athwart, and blasted, and confounded, and desolated, and humbled them. We have abundance of political expositions to account for these reverses; very good in their place. We ought to admit some moral expositions also. Our trouble may be accounted for on moral grounds; it is the red-forked lightning of God's retribution, upon a most unreasonably covetous generation. Oh! that we might accept penitently the punishment of our sins, and do more wisely for the future.

If we now glance at this matter on the smaller, the individual scale, we have the divine opinion as significantly expressed here. The

estate greedily gathered, is often very suddenly scattered. One day we saw the individual spreading himself like the green bay tree; we looked the next, and lo! he was not. Going up suddenly is very apt to be both the precursor and preparation for a fall. "Pride," says a racy old divine, "which was originally the devil's sin, has ever since been the devil's stratagem, who, like an expert wrestler, usually gives a man a lift before he gives him a throw."

But the retribution, when it comes in this world, is not always so speedy. Not unfrequently it is God's method to send the blasting upon those who come after—upon the children of the man who lived a successfully covetous and hoarding up life. God has been uttering it in his providence, in unequivocal tones, all along down the line of time, so that every generation has heard the voice, that estates largely accumulated to be left to children, do stand as ever present temptations to the expectants, making them indolent, making them vicious, making them mere cyphers in the world; not always so, but generally so. The fact is decisive, standing forth, obtruded upon the notice of all men, and all admit it.

Why, then, do men do so, particularly religious men, whom God has redeemed, has prospered, and made stewards on a large scale; who, by disbursing what is put into their hands, might raise up preachers, and keep them preaching, might send forth every where bibles, and tracts, and missionaries, and thus convey salvation to myriads of miserable dying men; but instead, they keep and concentrate, and still accumulate, when they do know that these possessions, which, employed as above, would be the means of immeasurably blessing souls, will, as they are proceeding, in high probability, bring insignificance and injury, temporal and eternal ruin upon their offspring. Why, in the name of reason and religion, do reasonable, christian men, conduct so; industriously labor to get together and keep together, the instruments of temptation and perdition to those they love—take the wealth out of the great channels of beneficence, where the Creator orders it, and turn it into the private channels, where God will curse it to ends of mischief and death?

From this voice of the divine retribution on covetousness in the present life, I pass to hint at some of the methods we may adopt, for the subduing and recovering from this so hateful and hurtful disposition.

The first and great blow must, of course, be struck against it by the Holy Spirit, commencing the change of the heart's utter selfishness into holy love. It is indipensable that a man be born again, in order to get a complete mastery of this sin.

But I remark again what I have already intimated, that a person may be a christian, and have within him not a little of this old leaven; so far as he has it, it is a great deformity, and a great hindrance to his usefulness and happiness. Every one who is indeed a christian, desires to get rid of it. Let him, then,

1. Consider and dwell upon Christ's opinion of it, and his mind

towards it, as expressed in his word. The one description of it as idolatry, regarded by a lover and worshiper of Jesus, must call forth, as seems to me, the most earnest prayer, to be delivered utterly from the gross inconsistency, from the debasing lust.

2. Let him dwell, also, upon God's opinion of it, and his mind towards it, as expressed in his providence. This view will awaken salutary fear; for God is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another. His judgments hang over the close hearted, worldly minded and world pursuing disciple. Let him know they will come ruinously upon himself, or upon his children, if he does not amend and get out of the way.

3. Let him dwell upon the inherent hatefulness of the disposition—a disposition to get from others, a disposition to get above others, and to keep an evil eye upon others for their possessions or their eminence. It is odious enough in the congenial connection of a supremely selfish heart. But in a heart which the Holy Ghost has made over—in the pure, great, philanthropic heart of the christian, it is tenfold more hateful, made so by the unfitting place it occupies. It is like giving a black fiend from the pit a standing with the angelic choir. Let every person so infested, look at the monstrous impropriety of the thing, and let him plead to heaven against it with all the faith and power of a christian, and with all the dignity and authority of an immortal agent, exclaim against it, "Get behind me, Satan."

4. Let him dwell upon the excellence and beauty of a character the opposite of this covetous, self-seeking and holding. The perfection of this character existed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into the world to do good; who went about in the world doing good; who died and rose again, and now reigns above to do good. There was no covetousness there. No gain did he aim at, but the gain of souls to heaven; no purchase did he make, but the purchase of souls by his own agony and blood. Bought with this price, "ye are not your own." Bought with such a price, ye may not employ your powers, but for the kingdom and the glory of him, whose ye are. It is a noble employment of them. There is consistency in this employment of them—one thing in profession, the same thing in the generous manifestations of the conduct. There is true greatness in this greatness of heart, which feels for, and cares for, and toils and gives for a sinning, suffering world. There is an excellence here, which all beings respect; an essential beauty, which attracts the gaze and commendation of the holy; a worthiness, founded on grace, which will call out the approval of him before whom we are hastening to stand. Let the person who needs correction and recovery from the bad disposition we are considering, look at the two in contrast; set the sordid over against the free and the generous, and see the shrunk and hateful deformity of the former, in the light of the divine beauty and glory of the latter. Let him but do this, and I am sure that he will come to some decisive action on the subject—that he will, at some rate, in some way, get rid of the former, and gain in the latter.

5. This leads me to add a word *more specifically upon the way.* Doing good, going forth, being generous, is the way. Benevolence in the heart, out in the conduct, disbursing, blessing, is the single, simple instrument which will assuredly kill the reptile, Covetousness. That groveling, crawling thing, cannot bear the touch of this divine wand. As the christian has the sure means of victory, let him enter upon a direct conflict with this sin. Let him meet it as branded, reprobate of God. Let him meet it, as a common even, and most disdisgusting deformity of the renewed character. Let him meet it, as one of the most prominent obstacles in the way of the world's redemption. The world cannot be redeemed without means. God's silver and gold are in part the means. These means have failed to be furnished to the desired extent, not because they have not existed, not because they have not been in the church, but because the church in all its periods has retained them, perverted them, employed them on other ends; because there *has been* and *is* so much covetousness in the hearts of christians. It is this that has held back the means against the loudest calls of God, and the shrillest cries of the perishing.

The sin in question, it should be remembered, is an inventive sin; when pushed, it can make excuses, and ingeniously plead off from the breadth and pressure of heaven's demand. The hard times are alleged, and properly, on the part of most, it is freely admitted. There is, very generally, a diminished, and with some, an utterly crippled ability. But there is danger that christians make too much of this excuse. It is to be feared there are those, still possessing the ability, but not having the heart they ought to have, who have made the pressure a pretence under which to escape from the claims of benevolence; who, instead of coming forward like christian men, with a lively gratitude for what is spared to them, and relieving the darkness of the times by their generous offerings, have taken advantage of this very darkness to hide in, both themselves and their means, like our first parents in the shrubbery of Eden, from the call of their Maker. I would not have made this remark, which some may deem uncharitable, did there not appear in almost every quarter, distinct evidence, that the retrenchment which the pressure compels, is, to a very great extent, in the charities; little or no abridgment of indulgences, in matters of pride or appetite, but a most grinding abridgment of the gifts to the cause of redemption and of God. Oh! this cruel, crafty foe of man and the world, helping to keep the world in gloom, and men out of heaven. When will the blood bought, benevolent disciples of Christ meet, resist, and extinguish it? Let us do it by doing good—burn out this base sentiment with the fire of benevolence. Let us give when we can, and when good opportunities are before us; give freely, for freely we have received; give the more the harder it comes, on account of the clinched gripings of this passion; give, as we have it, till we have crucified the ungodly feeling, and giving to scatter light, diffuse religion, and help on the cause of God, has become a cheerful habit, the heart's best pleasure, one of the sweetest satisfac-

tions of life. How blest to live with such a heart, the warm and great heart of christian charity, by its labors and offerings making others happy in time and through eternity. How blessed to die with such a heart, beholding in retrospect a career of benevolence, and before it an inheritance of glory. How blessed, with such a heart, to go forth into the future, and up to the judgment of the great God, and hear there the award of grace, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 7. Vol. XVI.) JULY, 1842. (Whole No. 187.

SERMON CCCXXVII.

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CONVERSION.

"Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"—Ezekiel xxxiii., 11.

This should be regarded as the language, not so much of imperative command, as of earnest expostulation—of entreaty. The great God of heaven and earth, notwithstanding the many provocations which he had received from his ungrateful people, and when he might in full justice destroy them, condescends to come down and plead with them. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*"

In the text, God sets forth and urges the performance of a *duty*. It is that of *turning from our evil ways;* or (which is the same) of *conversion.*

In the following discourse, I propose,

I. To explain the nature of conversion. And,

II. To urge the importance of it.

It is necessary to explain the nature of conversion, because the subject is commonly misunderstood, especially by the unconverted. Such persons have no experimental knowledge of conversion, and in general no proper conceptions of it. They imagine it to be something which it is not, and are often looking and striving after a change which, if accomplished, would not be conversion, and might not do them any good.

Conversion, then, is not a change in the *nature*, the *substance*, or in any of the *faculties* of the soul. We need no such change as this. We have no reason to expect any such change. And such a change, if accomplished, would not be conversion. It might not be to us of any benefit. We might be transformed into some other kind of creatures, but whether for the better or the worse, would remain to be seen afterwards.

Nor is conversion a change of any kind, in which the subject is *pas-*

sive, and for which he can do nothing but *wait*. Most unconverted persons seem to regard the change in question, in this light. They have no definite ideas as to the nature of conversion, but presume it is something in reference to which they have nothing to do, and for which they can do nothing but submissively to wait, till the work is accomplished in them by some foreign power. Now there can hardly be a greater mistake, or one of more disastrous influence, in regard to the nature of conversion, than this. The effect of such an impression can only be to excuse and quiet the soul in sin, and defer the great and needed change, without which we perish.

Conversion is set forth in the scriptures as a change in which the subject is *active*, and not passive; a change which he is instrumentally and actively to accomplish, and not one for which he is quietly to wait. So it is represented in the text. "*Turn ye, turn ye* from your evil ways;" implying that there is a *duty to be performed*—a *turning*, in which we are to be free and active.

When I speak of conversion as a change in which the subject of it is free and active, let it not be inferred that I exclude the special operations of the Holy Spirit in this work. So far from excluding these operations, I regard them as of indispensable necessity. But necessary for what? Not to transform a passive subject into some other kind of being or thing, but to "work in us to *will* and to *do*," while we *actively will* and *do*—to excite within us holy affections, while we *actively put forth such affections*. And the fact that the Holy Spirit is needed and is given for this important purpose, should not be perverted by us into an excuse for continued impenitence, under the miserable pretence of waiting for the Spirit, but should be an encouragement to us to immediate and vigorous action. We have the satisfaction of knowing that we do not undertake this great work alone. We have the Holy Spirit to work in us, and assist us. And the Spirit will never be wanting to us, unless we are wanting to ourselves.

The part of the Spirit, as I said, is to "work in us to *will* and to *do*," while we *actively will and do*—to excite within us holy affections, while we *actively put forth such affections*. And this brings us to the very *nature* of conversion,—a change in our *internal exercises and affections*, from those which are sinful, to those which are holy. It is a turning *for the first time* from our evil ways. It is the *commencement* of holy affections in a heart where such affections were before unknown.

Holy affections assume different forms, and have different names applied to them, according as they are put forth in view of different objects; but of whatever name or form, they possess the same general *nature* or *character*: Thus, the same kind of affection which, in view of the divine character, is holy, complacent *love*, will, in view of sin, be *repentance*; in view of Christ as a Savior, it will be *faith* or *trust*; in view of the divine favors, it will be *gratitude*; and in view of the divine government, it will be *submission*. The object of the holy affection may change, and with it the form and name of the affection, but the nature of it remains the same.

Conversion, as I said, is the *first* turning of a sinner from his evil ways. It is the *commencement* of holy affections in a heart, where such affections were before unknown. Up to this time, the heart of the sinner has been wholly sinful. It has been wholly under the influence of self and the world, so that holy affections have been entirely excluded. They have had no place there. But in the moment of conversion, holy affections are awakened. They are actively put forth, and it matters little what particular form these holy affections first assume. They may assume any form, provided they be but holy affections, and the *beginning* of them is conversion.

1. Conversion may be, and often is, the beginning of holy *love* to God;—of complacence in his character, and gratitude for his mercies. In illustration of this, we will suppose an individual who, during the greater part of his life, has been comparatively thoughtless of God. He has thought of almost everything else, but has forgotten God. And when, at any time, he has remembered God, he has been troubled. The thought has been painful to him. So far from clinging to God with affection and interest, he shrinks away from him with fear and dislike. He would gladly hide himself from God, as our guilty first parents did, among the trees of the garden. He banishes the unwelcome thought of him as soon as possible. The individual here supposed may not be an immoral man. He may not be a bad member of society. But the habitual state of his feelings towards God is such as has been described. But, at length, something occurs in the providence of God—some striking event, it may be—or the reading of some book—or the hearing of an awakening sermon—or the presentation of some truth or fact, which excites within him a new train of reflections. He thinks of God as he never thought before. He has views of his character such as he never had before. He begins to feel delight in this character. It is a wonderful character—a glorious character. It comes up with new interest before the mind. He wishes to contemplate it all the time. He is astonished that he has never seen it in the same light before. He thinks now of the goodness of God to him, and is melted under a sense of it. He wants words to express his gratitude to that Being who has borne so long with him, and has been so gracious and merciful towards him. The individual here spoken of may not know, at the time, what to think of these new impressions and feelings. He may have no thought that they are conversion, or that they indicate conversion. He may have no thought of himself as a converted person. But he *is* one. If he is not deceived respecting the nature of his feelings, he certainly *is* a converted soul. The new exercises above described are not those of nature, but of grace; the springing up of which, for the first time, in the sinner's heart, constituted his *turning*—his *conversion*. That was the happy moment which he will remember for ever, as the commencement of his walk with God.

2. Conversion may be, and often is, the beginning of *repentance*, of *godly sorrow* for sin. The subject of conversion, in this form of it, has passed the whole of his previous life in sin; not, it may be, in the prac-

tice of open immoralities, but in selfishness, in pride, in a love of the world, in thoughtlessness and vanity, in forgetfulness of God—in some way in the love and practice of sin. And yet his sins have given him very little trouble. He has had little thought or anxiety in respect to them. They have not been, perhaps, of the more disgraceful character. At least, they have not been known to be such. He has sinned in good company, and in altogether a respectable way; and he has contrived so to palliate and conceal his sins, that he has had little sorrow or distress on account of them. But, for some reason or other, his thoughts of late have been turned into a different channel. He has been led to review his past life, and see how his account stands with God. He has been led to do it with considerable scrutiny; and he is pained and frightened at the result. He had no idea that his sins were so numerous, or of so aggravated a character. He had no idea that they were characterised by such baseness. They now seem to him to be most unreasonable and odious, and he seems to himself to be a vile and odious creature on account of them. When he thinks of the manner in which he has treated God—his ingratitude towards him—his forgetfulness of him—his dislike of his character and transgression of his laws; he feels sorry and aggrieved. He feels humbled and ashamed. He cannot bear a view of himself. He begins to "loathe and abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes." Now this man, instead of growing better in his own opinion, during the change of feeling through which he has passed, has seemed to himself to be constantly growing worse. He never had such a sense of his own vileness as he now has. He has no thought of conversion, at least, as having been already accomplished in him. And yet, if his feelings are such as they have been described, he is already a converted person. He is a true penitent. He feels as David did, when he said, "Behold I am vile;" and as the publican did, when he smote upon his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The first holy affection of which he was sensible was one of *penitence;* and the *beginning* of these repentings in his heart was his conversion.

3. Conversion is often the commencement of true *submission* to God. The subject of conversion, in this form of it, has always lived under the government of God, and has always been (though, perhaps, not always sensible of it) *unreconciled* to this government. He has never been truly willing that God should reign over him, and do with him according to his pleasure. He has never been willing to be entirely in the hands of God, and at his sovereign disposal. To be sure, when God's plans have coincided with his own plans—when God has pleased him, and prospered him, and caused his cup to overflow with blessings, he has been very happy, and has felt as though he could be quite reconciled to be in the hands of God. But when God has seen fit to pursue a different course with him—crossing his track—blasting his hopes—disappointing his expectations, and defeating his cherished designs—taking from him this comfort, and that, and the other, and laying them low;—when God has seen fit to try him in this way, the secrets of his character have come out. He could not repress his murmurs and complaints.

He said, almost unconsciously, "This is a hard master. These are wounds without cause." His opposition, under such circumstances, has arisen, it may be, so high, that he has become frightened at himself. He had no idea that he had such a rebellious and wicked heart. He is sure that, with such a heart, he is in no situation to enjoy God, either in this world or the next; and he is led to commune with himself—to contemplate his relations to God, and the claims of God upon him, as he never did before. He reflects that God has a perfect *right* to deal with him as he has done—that in visiting him with sore afflictions, God has done no more than he had a *right* to do. He reflects that he *deserves* all these afflictions and a great deal more—that the divine dispensations towards him, so far from being unjust, have all been mingled with mercy. He farther considers that these dispensations, of which he had been disposed to complain, were certainly ordered in *wisdom* and *goodness*, and, if suitably improved by him, would work together for his good. He begins seriously to inquire, whether it is not a *privilege* to live under the government of God;—to be in the hands of one who can make no mistakes—who can indulge no ill-will towards any creature—who can do no wrong thing—and whose wise and good designs no enemy can ever disappoint or defeat. He dwells upon the subject in these various lights, till, at length, his heart begins to yield. He *submits* to the divine government. He more than submits—he rejoices in it. He rejoices that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. He feels a pleasure that is new to him, in resigning himself and all his concerns into the hands of this holy and sovereign God, to be disposed of as he shall see wisest and best. Now this man has experienced a great and radical change of feeling in regard to the divine government; and this change is *conversion*. It is the same which we must all experience, in one form or another, before we can see the kingdom of God.

4. I remark, again; conversion sometimes shows itself in an act of solemn *self-consecration*, or the adoption of a solemn *purpose* henceforth to live to the glory of God. Here is a person who, from the beginning of his moral existence to the present time, has lived only for himself. In all his plans, he has planned for himself. In all his labors, he has labored for himself. His own good—his own supposed interest and happiness, or that of his family and friends, has been to him the chief object of attraction and pursuit. Self, in some form, has been made the central point, and other things have been valued or rejected, just according as they bore upon this. After all, this man may not have been any more selfish than his neighbors; nor may his selfishness have been more manifest than theirs. It may have been concealed, honeyed over, as it commonly is, under an imposing exterior of outward professions and appearances. Still, it was *there;* and as soon as he comes to look closely into his heart, he sees it there. He can but see it. And the sight of it is painful to him. It is humbling to him. He sees that he has been living for a very inferior and unworthy object—that he has been living after a most miserable manner. He knows that

he *ought* to "live no longer unto himself, but to him who died for him and rose again;"—that he *ought* to "glorify God in his body and spirit, which are God's;"—that "whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does," he *ought* to "do all to the glory of God." He sees now the reasonableness and propriety of these requisitions, and he begins to yield to them. He begins to exalt the Lord God in his heart—to set him up, above self, above the world, above everything. He consecrates and devotes himself to God, and desires and prays that he may be enabled, henceforth, to live to his glory. Here we have another exhibition of conversion—the commencement of holy exercises under another name and form. Whenever persons can thus renounce self and the world—when, from the heart, they can give up themselves to God, and consecrate and devote themselves to his service, undoubtedly they are converted persons.

5. I remark once more; conversion may be, and often is, the commencement of *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. In illustration of this, we will suppose an individual, who is deeply and truly convinced of sin. He sees himself to be a guilty and lost sinner, who has no means of hope or help in himself, and can discover no method of deliverance from any other quarter. He knows that a just sentence of condemnation has been passed upon him, and, for aught that appears, he must sink for ever under it. He has been in this state of conviction, distress, and almost of despair, it may be, for a long time, looking for light, but beholds darkness; seeking rest, but finding none. At length, some passage of scripture is opened and applied to him, by the help of which he gets a view of the Savior. He sees him to be almighty and all-sufficient—just such a Savior as his perishing case requires. He sees him extend his gracious arms, and hears him say, in accents of love, "Come, come; for all things are now ready." And now he *yields* to the winning invitation. He falls at once into Jesus' arms. With joy and gratitude he embraces the offered Savior, and commits himself to his faithful hands.

The case of the gifted and excellent Cowper is so illustrative of this form of conversion, that I shall be excused in referring to it. He had been for months under the most distressing convictions of sin, and in a state of despair bordering on madness, when the period of his deliverance, at length, arrived. He was reading in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, respecting the way of salvation by Christ, when, says he, "immediately I received strength to *believe*, and the full beams of the sun of righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement which Christ had made, saw my pardon sealed in his blood, and all the fulness and completeness of his justification. *In a moment I believed and received the gospel.* And now, unless the almighty arm had been under me, I think I should have died with gratitude and joy. My eyes filled with tears, and my voice choked with transport, I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. But the work of the Holy Spirit is best described in his own words; it was 'joy unspeakable and full of glory?' How glad should

I now have been to have spent every moment in prayer and thanksgiving! I lost no opportunity in repairing to a throne of grace, I flew to it with an earnestness irresistible and never to be satisfied. Could I help it? Could I do otherwise than love and rejoice in my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus? For many succeeding weeks, tears were ready to flow, if I did but speak of the gospel, or so much as mention the name of Jesus. To rejoice day and night was all my employment. Too happy to sleep much, I thought it was lost time that was spent in slumber. Oh! that the ardor of my first love had continued."*

I have been the more particular in describing conversion in hope that the nature of it may be understood. It is, as you perceive, no physical change—no passive transformation, but a change in the character of our internal exercises or affections, from those which are, in some form, *sinful*, to those which are, in some form, *holy*. And it is of little importance, what particular form the change assumes, or how it is first developed, provided it *be* the change which has been described. The first holy exercise of which the individual is sensible, may be one of love, or penitence, or submission, or faith. This is a circumstance of minor consequence, provided the new exercise be a holy one, and be followed out (as it will be) by newness of life and new obedience.

This new exercise, which is put forth in conversion, and in the putting forth of which conversion consists, from the nature of the case, is *actively* put forth. It can be put forth in no other way. It is wrought in us by the special operations of the Holy Spirit, but in a manner perfectly consistent with the free and natural actings of our own minds. Thus, while the glory of the change in question is devoutly to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit, as its author, the change itself is accomplished *in us*, and in the free and regular exercise of our own powers. It is *we* that love—*we* that repent—*we* that believe, submit, and obey—*we* that turn from our evil ways, and commence walking in those ways of wisdom which are pleasantness, and those paths which are peace.

Having thus described, as well as I am able, the *nature* of conversion, the way is prepared to urge, as proposed,

II. The *importance* of it. It will be my endeavor, under this branch of the subject, to convince and persuade the unconverted part of this assembly in reference to a most important question of duty. I shall hope to persuade some of them, at least, to *turn from their evil ways*, and put forth those new and holy affections which the gospel requires.

The *first* argument I shall urge in favor of conversion is, that it is, in itself, *reasonable*. The turning, the change, spoken of in the text, is altogether a reasonable change. If it were not so, I certainly would not urge it; and if I cannot make it appear that it is so, I will not ask you farther to consider it. But is it not reasonable, my hearers? Be pleased to look at it under each of the forms that have been presented, and see if, in any view, and every view that can be taken of the subject, the change in conversion is not reasonable.

* Life of Cowper, by himself, p. 67.

1. I have said that conversion is often the beginning of *holy love* to the Supreme Being. And is it not in the highest degree reasonable, to love this great and glorious Being—who *is* infinitely lovely—whose character combines, in perfection, every amiable and attractive quality? What can be more reasonable than to love a *benefactor?* And is not God our greatest Benefactor? What being has ever done or can do, in any measure, so much for us as God? And shall we not be willing to return to him the grateful love and affection of our hearts? Assuredly, I have the conscience of every hearer on my side, when I insist that the very first and plainest dictate of reason, in reference to our religious concerns, is, that we *love God.* But the moment we begin to love God—the true God—the God of the Bible—with a holy, complacent, grateful love, we are converted.

2. I have said that conversion is often the beginning of *repentance,* of *godly sorrow* for sin. And what can be more reasonable, than sorrow for a fault? The merest child has understanding enough to perceive, that when he does wrong, he ought to be sorry for it. If one of your neighbors injuriously treats either of you, you think that he ought to be sorry for what he has done, and make you all the reparation in his power. Now every sin is injuriously treating the Supreme Being. It is a fault committed directly against God. And no words can make the proposition plainer than it is on the bare presentation of it, that godly sorrow for sin—that sorrow which worketh repentance unto life—is altogether reasonable.

3. I have said that conversion is often the beginning of holy *submission* to God. And is not this a reasonable duty? God has certainly a right to rule and reign over us. He made us out of nothing. He is the author and bestower of all our blessings. We are absolutely *his,* and he has a right to give us laws, and to dispose of us according to his pleasure. And for us to rebel against his government, is to resist, at every step, what is right. For us to submit to his government is barely to yield to him his right—to accord to him what is obviously his due, and our duty.—But the government of God is not only rightful and legitimate, it is *wise* and *good.* It is absolutely perfect. The ends at which it aims are the noblest possible. The means by which it proposes to secure these ends are the most proper and desirable that can be conceived. It is the height of folly, therefore, as well as of wickedness, to resist such a government. It is the perfection of reason to submit to it, and rejoice in it.

4. I have said that conversion not unfrequently exhibits itself in the adoption of a solemn, deliberate *purpose,* henceforth to live, not unto ourselves, but to the glory of the Supreme Being. And is it not, in this view, a reasonable service? What can be more unreasonable than selfishness? What is there in this little self, to entitle it to supreme regard? What are *my* little separate interests, that I should exalt them above God—above the interests of the universe—above everything? That I should make these a central point, and estimate other things only according as they bear upon this?—Suppose, for the sake of

illustration, that this earth were to rebel against the sun, and instead of revolving around *it* as a centre, should insist that the sun, and all the planets, and all their satellites, should commence revolving about itself. Yet such a revolt in the natural world would certainly not be more unreasonable, or be attended by more disastrous consequences, than is selfishness in the moral world. Nor could the return of the revolted earth, under the circumstances supposed, to its natural position and movements in the solar system, be more strenuously demanded by the laws of nature, than is the return of sordid, selfish man to the great centre of moral attraction and interest, demanded by the laws of reason and of right.

5. I have said that conversion is often the commencement of true *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. And viewed in this light it is certainly reasonable. What are the *facts* in the case? Here is the sinner, oppressed with guilt, condemned by the law, with no means of help or deliverance in his power, and with nothing in prospect, but "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." And here is the great Savior with extended arms;—able to save him—willing to save him—inviting him to come and receive salvation, as the gift of his love. And now is it not reasonable that the sinner should listen and comply? Is it not of all things most reasonable, that he should come to Christ, and embrace him as the wretched Cowper did, and rejoice in the fulness of his salvation.

You see, then, my hearers, in every view which can be taken of the subject, that *the conversion of the heart*—that *turning from sin* which I am endeavoring to urge upon you, is a most reasonable service. I urge it upon you, because it is a reasonable service. It is one, I know, which your own reason, not less than mine—which your own conscience, not less than the word of God, demands.

The argument here urged in favor of conversion should be alone sufficient, even if there were no other. We ought to be willing to do what is, in itself, *reasonable* and *right*, let the consequences be what they may. But other and weighty reasons in favor of an immediate turning from sin, growing out of the blessed *consequences* of such a change, remain to be proposed.

I observe, therefore, in the *second* place, that conversion is followed by *the best present results*. It saves from much misery and confers much happiness in the present life. It dries up many sources of *un*happiness, which are open to us while living in sin, and from which nothing but conversion can deliver us.

1. One of these consists in the stings and reproaches of conscience. Every sinner has a conscience—one which, however seared and stifled, will, at times, rebuke and distress him. It will tell him of neglected duties, and violated obligations—of mercies abused, and guilt incurred. It will summon him, at times, to a solemn reckoning, and warn him of the awful retribution that awaits him. The mental agonies which are endured from the stings and reproaches of conscience, are often very great. They are enough to embitter the whole cup of life. And there is no way in which these miseries can be assuaged or mitigated, but by

conversion. Let the sinner turn from his evil ways, and enter on the possession and practice of holiness, and that same conscience, which before was a terror and a trouble to him, will be, henceforth, his most complacent associate. It will whisper peace to his pained heart, and bless him with its approving smiles.

2. Another source of unhappiness to the sinner, while living in indulged sin, grows out of that *war with himself*—that *inward struggle and conflict*, to which he is perpetually subject. This is a conflict between the different parts of his own moral nature, which the practice of sin has set at variance, and which nothing but conversion can ever harmonize. In his present state, reason dictates one thing to the sinner, and he pursues another. Conscience points him in one direction, and he follows another. His better judgment whispers, "This is the way; walk ye in it;" but his rebellious heart refuses to obey. And in this interminable conflict, between reason and inclination, conscience and will, the better judgment and an unyielding heart, his soul is continually disturbed and agitated. It is rendered like "the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." When the sinner turns from his evil ways, and never before, this war in his bosom ceases. In the moment of conversion, the heart yields, the will bows, and the nobler principles of the soul become predominant. Thenceforward, and never before, are they listened to and obeyed.

3. Still another source of unhappiness to the sinner consists in a continual and painful sense of *unpreparedness* to meet God in his providential dispensations.—Much as the sinner is unreconciled to God, he knows that he is in his sovereign hands, to do with him as he pleases. He can kill him or spare him alive, prosper or afflict him, as seemeth good in his sight. He knows, too, that the providences of God are inscrutable. Between himself and the entire future, there hangs up a dark and impenetrable curtain, so that he cannot tell what a day or an hour may bring forth. He is in health to-day, but he may be sick to-morrow. He is in prosperity to-day, but he may be in deep affliction to-morrow. He is alive on the earth to-day, but to-morrow he may be dead, and in the world of despair. He is completely in the hands of God; and in what manner God is intending to dispose of him he cannot tell. And when he thinks of this subject, as think he must at times, he feels disquieted. He feels alarmed. He knows he is not ready to meet God in his providences—especially in those distressing, crushing providences, which may be very near to overwhelm him. Now there is no way, sinner, in which this source of unhappiness can ever be dried up, but by conversion. Only turn from your sins, and enter at once into the service of Christ, and you are prepared for anything. Nothing can injure you. Come prosperity or adversity, sickness or health, life or death, you are prepared to meet it. You are now in the number of those, to whom "all things work together for good."

4. I shall mention but another source of unhappiness to the sinner, while living in a course of sin, and this is his constant feeling of *exposure* to the merited wrath and indignation of heaven. He knows that

that God, at whose mercy he lies, and on whose bounty he lives, is angry with him. He knows that he *must* be angry with him. He sees the rod of his anger extended over him, ready to inflict the merited vengeance; and he trembles at his dread exposure. He feels, as an aged sinner once told me that he had felt habitually for forty years,—as though a drawn dagger was all the while pointed at his heart. Now with such a feeling, it matters little what our worldly circumstances may be. We may be as rich as Crœsus, and may have ever so much of the honors and pleasures of the world; this feeling of *exposure* to the merited wrath of God is alone sufficient to spoil all our pleasures.

Some of you recollect the story, which we used to read when we were children at school, of the tyrant of Sicily and his flatterer. This flatterer undertook to persuade Dionysius, the tyrant, that he was the happiest man in the world. "You have riches, honors, and pleasures in abundance—everything that your heart can desire—and you are the happiest man in the world." "Well, flatterer," says Dionysius, "have you a mind to try it?" "Why, yes; I should like to try it very much." And so the king ordered a splendid banquet to be prepared for him. The tables were loaded with all the dainties of the East; the flatterer was seated down to them in great state; and for a moment, he thought himself happy. But just as he was beginning to taste of the feast, he chanced to cast his eye upward, when he saw a glittering sword, suspended by a single hair, and hanging directly over his head. Immediately the cup of pleasure was dashed from his lips. His sensual enjoyments were all spoiled. He begged the king to remove him, in a moment, from a situation so appalling and so dreadful.—Now this fitly illustrates the case of the sinner, under the government of God. Whatever his worldly circumstances may be, there hangs suspended over him, by a single hair, the glittering sword of divine wrath. It may fall at any time. It *must* fall in a very little time, and pierce him to the soul. So far as his eyes are open to see anything of a spiritual nature, he must see his awful danger. He must fear and tremble in view of it. And there is no way in which he can quiet these fears, and deliver himself from this state of horrible exposure, but by conversion. Let him turn from his sins, and give his heart to God, and the flaming sword is at once sheathed. It is taken out of the way, and so far from trembling in prospect of the coming wrath, he now rejoices in a Savior's love.

It is admitted that the present life is short, and that the concerns of this life are trifles, compared with the weightier concerns of eternity. And yet it is of some importance to us to be happy here—to be happy, not in the feverish pleasures of sin, but on *solid, enduring principles*. And sure I am, that there is no such happiness for any being, in the practice of wickedness. It is only by *turning from sin*, or by *conversion*, that we have it in our power to secure substantial enjoyments in the present world.

Conversion is important, in the *third* place, as it is the only way in which to secure the *approbation* and *favor* of the Supreme Being.

This consideration may seem trifling to some; but a moment's reflection will satisfy us that it is one, in itself, of very great interest and importance. Suppose, my impenitent hearer, that by some act of yours, you could secure the decided approbation of all the inhabitants of this *state*, or of this great *nation*. Or, to extend your views farther, suppose, by this act, you could secure the united approbation of the *world*. By one act, you could draw towards yourself the eyes of the whole world, and could secure the favor of all its inhabitants, so that your name should dwell on every heart, and your praises should be sounded by every tongue. Or, to extend your views still farther, suppose, by this one act, you could make yourself known, and most favorably known, to the entire *universe* of created beings. You could arrest the notice of angels, as well as of men, and cause all creatures to cast upon you a look of favor, and a smile of love. Would you not think such an act worth performing? Would not the *motives*, the *inducements* to the performance of it be exceedingly powerful? But what, I ask, is the favor of the united world, or of the created universe, compared with the favor and approbation of God? We see, at once, that it is as nothing. The favor of the world could be, at best, but mere breath—changing, fluctuating as the wind that blows; but the favor of God is as unchanging as his throne. The favor of the world must soon pass away and be forgotten; but the favor of God will endure for ever. The immutable, everlasting favor of God, which is represented in the scriptures as life, and as even better than life, can be secured by *conversion*, and in no other way. While we persist in our sins, we cannot enjoy it. But when we penitently turn from them, it is freely, gratuitously bestowed.

In the *fourth* place, I urge the importance of conversion, from the consideration suggested in the text. It *saves from death*. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye *die*, O house of Israel?" The death here spoken of cannot be *temporal dissolution;* because conversion does not save from that. Converted persons die *temporally*, as well as others. The death intended is doubtless *eternal* death—that death which is represented, in other parts of the scriptures, as the proper wages and desert of sin. The future punishment of the wicked is set forth in the scriptures, by a variety of terrific and awful figures. But I know of no figurative representation of it more expressive and appalling, than that employed in the text. It is *death —eternal death*. Did you ever, my impenitent friend, stand by the bedside of a dying fellow creature? Did you witness, hour after hour, his dissolving agonies? Did you see his glazed eye, and the cold sweat upon his face; his anguished struggles, and convulsive throes? Did you hear him groan? Did you see him die? Now, this is *literal*, temporal death; and these mortal agonies, the inspired writers have laid hold of, that, under the image of them as enduring for ever, they might adequately set forth the future punishment of the lost. This future punishment is *eternal death*. It is to be eternally dying, and never to die. It is to writhe, and toss, and groan, and agonize for ever

in the struggle with death, and yet death never come to the rescue—never come to end the conflict. This, I repeat, is *eternal death*. This is the death referred to in the text, from which conversion will save the sinner, and from which nothing else can. If he will turn from his evil ways, he need not die; but persisting in them, there is no help for him. There is, in this case, no deliverer from that dreadful destruction which has been described.

But conversion does more than to save from death.

I urge, in the *fifth* place, that it secures *life*—immortal life and bliss to the soul. It introduces those who experience it into the family of God. It makes them heirs of all the promises—"heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." They are to be kept, while here on earth, by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto salvation. Their path is to be that of the just, which shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. When they go down into the dark valley, they shall not be deserted. They shall be sustained, comforted, and carried triumphantly through. And when they appear in other worlds, they shall go to dwell with Christ, with angels, and with all the redeemed, in the Paradise of God above. In the morning of the resurrection, their bodies shall be raised, glorious bodies, and be re-united to their happy, triumphing souls. Amid all the terrors of the judgment, they shall stand undismayed. In the issues of it, they shall be acquitted and blessed, and be caught away from the judgment-bar to meet their Lord in the air;—and so shall they ever be with the Lord. They are to have their eternal dwelling amid the glories of the heavenly state. They are to advance in knowledge, holiness and bliss—their powers ever expanding, and ever delightfully occupied—their measure ever enlarging, and ever full—for ever and ever.

Such, in its *consequences*—its happy, glorious, interminable consequences—is conversion. And who will say that, considered as an *event*, a *change*, it is not one of amazing interest? Who will pretend that, as a *duty*, it is not one of the most urgent character, and of the greatest possible importance? Other duties may be neglected, and our highest interests may not be put at hazard. But no person can neglect or delay the duty of *conversion*, without putting at hazard everything which ought to be dear to him—his present peace, and his future joys—his comforts in this life, and his everlasting consolations beyond the grave.

I conclude, with appealing directly to the unconverted part of this assembly, and asking them whether they will not now comply with the exhortation in the text? Will you not now listen to the pleading voice of your heavenly Father, and turn from your evil ways? You have heard what this conversion *is*, which we urge upon you. You have heard of the *reasonableness*, the *propriety* of it, in every form which it assumes—in every view which can be taken of the subject. You have heard of the miseries which it alleviates—the sources of unhappiness which it dries up—the divine favor which it secures—the joys and privileges which it confers, in the present world. You have

heard of that dreadful death, from which conversion, and this alone, can save you; and of that immortal, enduring, and most glorious life to which it conducts you. And now the question is pressed home upon you, in all its force, *What will you do?* Will you listen? Will you obey? Will you *turn?* You may, if you will. You *must* if you will. And if you will not, you *cannot*. What I mean to say is, this change can never be accomplished in you, but with the hearty concurrence and co-operation of your own wills. Nor is this a subject on which you can long balance yourself, so as not to decide it either way. The truth is, you *must* decide it, one way or the other, and you will. If you do not repent of your sins, you will persist in them. If you do not come to Christ, you will reject him. If you do not turn, you will continue as you are. Again, then, I ask, and I would press the inquiry with all the tenderness and earnestness of which I am capable: *What will you do?* Will you yield to the suggestions of Satan, and your own evil hearts, and venture on in sin, and risk the consequences? Or will you not rather listen to the monitions of conscience—the impulses of the Spirit—and the voice of God, crying to you in his word, *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for* WHY WILL YE DIE?

SERMON CCCXXVIII.

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THE LIVING REDEEMER.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth."—Job xix. 25, 26.

The very striking and solemn manner of its introduction, will not allow us to doubt that the passage out of which our text is taken, was pronounced by Job from a sudden impulse of prophetic inspiration. In the former part of the chapter he is bowed to the dust under his accumulated distresses, and seems to have given up all hope of a deliverance in this life. He suffers more keenly from the cruel persecution of mistaken friends, who, instead of comforting him with their sympathy, upbraid him in his calamities, as though they were judgments upon him for unusual guilt, and his religion a detected hypocrisy. He gives vent to his anguish in that touching appeal, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me. Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?" In this extremity of his sorrow, God comes to his relief and sustains him with grace according to his need. He bursts forth with a vehemence and confidence of language which must have been suggested by an immediate revelation of God's redeeming love. "O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book (or inscribed on a memorial!) that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and, though worms destroy this body, yet, in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another, though my reins be consumed within me."

Great force is added to the passage, if we admit the not improbable opinion of Schultens, (one of the best, if not the very best commentators upon this part of the Scriptures,) that the patriarch, in the verses introductory to the prophetic declaration, refers to an inscription upon a sepulchral stone.

O that my words were now written down!
O that they were inscribed on a memorial!
With an iron stylus and lead,
That they were engraven for ever upon a rock.

He relies upon God for his ultimate and full vindication. Expecting to go down to the grave under the reproach of guilt, he would have it engraven upon the stone at the door of his sepulchre, that his trust was in his Redeemer—the Living One, who, he believed, at the last days would stand upon the earth, and, raising up his body from the dust, would admit him to a personal enjoyment of his presence and favor for ever.

Beloved christians, what Job knew at best in part, we know, from the consenting testimony of prophets and apostles, in the fulness of its saving truth. He, "of whom Moses and all the prophets did write," has come. He has appeared upon the earth—Jesus, the Son of God, our Elder Brother—and inspired historians and apostles, who were eye-witnesses of the stupendous facts, declare to us, that, having purchased our redemption by his vicarious death upon the cross, he rose again from the dead, leaving the broken bars of death as the earnest of our resurrection, and ascended to the right hand of God in the heavens, from whence he has promised to come, the second time, to take all his people, body and soul, up with him to glory. With what confidence then should every christian exclaim this day, "I know that my Redeemer liveth!"

And how high and holy should be the aim and hope which such a faith should awaken in our souls!

You will at once see, that our text, short as it is, contains vastly more than we can even touch upon in a single sermon. Our time will not be enough for a sufficient meditation upon the one great thought I have selected from the rest—the blessedness of faith in a living Redeemer.

We shall consider,

I. The meaning of the term *Redeemer*, as applied to our Lord Jesus Christ. And,

II. The excellence of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a *living Redeemer*.

I. The meaning of the term *Redeemer*, as applied to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew word GOEL, which is here and elsewhere rendered Redeemer, has two significations. One, to be stained or polluted with blood; the other, to ransom, redeem, or purchase back. The first is with little doubt the original signification.

The use of the word, as an official designation, arose in this manner:

From the earliest times, the life of a murderer was considered forfeit; but, as the laws in those simple forms of society were few, the punishment of the murderer was left to the nearest kinsman of the slain person, who not only had a right to avenge the death of his relation, but was dishonored until he had done so. This primeval law was, in the most solemn manner, confirmed by God himself, in the revelation he made to

Noah and his sons after the flood, when he said, "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man; whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man." From this point the law of the avenger went with the families of man as they became scattered abroad on the face of the whole earth. It can be traced among the Greeks and the Romans, the early Germans, Britons, and Saxons. The Gentoo code (the most ancient law of India) contains no penalty for murder, clearly leaving it to the avenger of blood; and, as is well known, the vengeance of an American savage for a slain kinsman never sleeps until it is satiated with the blood of the slayer. It was in full force among the Jews, as we see in the setting apart of cities of refuge from the pursuing avenger to soften the rigor of the law in more pardonable cases, and in the story of the widow of Tekoah, who pleaded before David for her remaining son, who had murdered his brother, that his life might be spared from the avengers of blood, lest she should be made childless. "Indeed," says Blackstone, speaking of the universality of this law, "it seems as if the finger of Nature had pointed it out to mankind." But as an excellent writer justly remarks, "The finger of Nature is no other than the law of God."

The duties of the Redeemer, especially among the Jews, were increased, as the forms of society became more complicated.

Thus it was his duty or right *to deliver his kinsman out of captivity by force or ransom*, and to buy out or redeem him when his liberty had been forfeited by debt. "If," says the law of Moses, "thy brother wax poor and sell himself . . . . after that he is sold, he may be redeemed again: one of his brethren may redeem him." (Lev. xxv., 47, 48.)

In him was the right of *buying back an inheritance* that had passed out of the hands of a poorer kinsman. "If thy brother be waxed poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kindred come to redeem it, then shall he redeem what his brother hath sold." (Lev. xxv., 25.)

So it was he who stood forth and *advocated the right of those who were too weak to sustain their own cause*, as in the case of the female. You have a beautiful instance of this in the story of Ruth and Boaz, and indeed to this day the law allows a woman to appear by her next friend.

"This right of redemption," says the valuable author whom we have already quoted, "was a practice purposely invented to prefigure and represent the mode in which the promised Messiah would ransom his people." Nor is it possible to understand those passages of scripture which treat of our redemption, without a knowledge of this office of the kinsman Redeemer. I say *kinsman* Redeemer, for it was essential to the constitution of a Redeemer that he should be a near kinsman of those in whose behalf he acted. All these offices of the Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ was fitted to sustain, and has executed, or will execute for us. To become our Redeemer he became our *kinsman*. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "Forasmuch as the children

are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same." Jehovah our righteousness is our kinsman Redeemer.

He has taken vengeance upon the great enemy of our race, when as "the seed of the woman" he "bruised the head of the serpent," "destroying death and him that had the power of death," that he might snatch the souls of his people from the mighty and deliver the captives of Satan from his power. (St. Luke i., 71, 74.)

He hath redeemed his people from under the sentence of the law and their liability to a perpetual imprisonment by paying in his own death the price of their redemption. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

He also (blessed be his name!) when our fair inheritance in God's favor was lost, and man, shut out from his native paradise, was too poor to buy it back again, appeared in our behalf, and redeemed it for us by his own righteousness, so that now through grace the merits of that righteousness entitle the believer to an entrance within the second paradise of God.

And he, when we were too weak and unworthy to stand up and plead our own cause before God, undertook its advocacy himself, and became our ever ready and availing intercessor with the Father.

Thus there are three principal things intended by Christ's title of Redeemer.

1. Atonement or satisfaction made to the divine law in behalf of his people.

2. Deliverance and salvation of his people from all their enemies and difficulties.

3. And the securing for them an eternal inheritance of life and blessedness.

Keeping these in our minds let us now consider

II. The excellence of our Lord Jesus as a *living* Redeemer.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth."

He whom Job knew to be his Redeemer is the only begotten Son of God in whom we trust. The patient patriarch rejoiced in him as the Living one, who beheld his sufferings and had compassion on him, believing that he would according to his promise accomplish a full redemption. It is our greater privilege to rejoice in Him as having provided by the infinite merits of his life and death upon earth all that was now necessary to our redemption, and living again to secure and apply the benefits of that redemption to all who believe upon his name.

The Son of Man, who spake in revelation to the disciple who "was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ," speaks by his Gospel to every believer, saying, "Fear not; I am the First and the Last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and, behold! I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

The excellence of Christ as our living Redeemer is seen in his *resurrection*, in his *power*, and in his *glory*.

1. In his *resurrection*. The declaration was early made that with-

out the shedding of blood there was no remission. By sin our lives were all forfeited, and could only be returned by a sufficient life offered and accepted in our behalf. The penalty of the law must be utterly paid and its just vengeance exhausted in our behalf, before the just God could consistently with his own word justify a sinner. Under the Jewish law, and before it, up to the sacrifice of Abel, innumerable victims had bled for men, but still new victims were required, until the Lamb of God, the realities of those types, and substances of those shadows, came and offered himself without spot upon the cross. His blood was shed. He gave up the ghost. His life was taken. But on the third day, he that was the sacrifice for sin, who was actually crucified, dead, and buried, rises again from the dead, alive in body and soul, because it was not possible that he should be holden of death. Why? Because his death was sufficient, because his life satisfied the law, because the penalty was exhausted, because, having given himself up to the law that he might redeem his people, now that the full price was paid, the law, or death its avenger, had no more power over him. "I have power," said he "to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again." Now there is no more need of victims to be slain upon the altar, "the sacrifice and the oblation hath ceased." Jesus living after his death assures us that the atonement was *complete.* Christ is able to save unto the uttermost because he is our Living Redeemer.

The scriptures which speak of Christ rising again from the dead, declare also that God the Father raised him up. But his resurrection by the Father was a close consequence of the sufficiency of his death. "The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood* of the everlasting covenant." Christ had undertaken the atonement on the express promise and covenant of the Father to accept the sufficient sacrifice as the ground of pardon to the believer, and now that the atonement has been made, and the blood whose merit in the sight of God is beyond all price has been shed, God, by virtue of his covenant, declares the satisfaction complete by raising up the Savior from the dead. The atonement is declared complete by Christ rising in his own power; it is declared to be *accepted by the Father,* inasmuch as he raised him in token of his wrath having passed away.

But, the resurrection of Jesus which is ascribed to his own power, and to the power of the Father, is also ascribed to the power of the Holy Ghost. "Declared," saith the apostle in Romans, "to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." And in Ephesians he declares that the same mighty POWER (even the Holy Ghost) which raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, quickens with him all his people who were dead in trespasses and sins. Christ died to save his people from their sins, from that bondage to sin which is part of the punishment of sin. Unless his people were thus quickened with a new and holy life, his death was in vain. But in his resurrection by the Holy Ghost, we have the earnest of a certain and holy spiritual resurrection of all who

by faith are members of his body. The Holy Ghost thus assures the success of the atonement of Christ the crucified, in the quickened body of our living Redeemer.

Here then, in Christ's raising himself, you see the *sufficiency* of the atonement. In the Father's raising of him, you see the *acceptance* of the atonement. In his being quickened by the Holy Ghost, you see the *power* of the atonement, for the certain salvation of all who rely upon his finished work. But for the resurrection of Christ from the dead, our faith would be vain, our preaching vain, and we are yet in our sins. Now in our living Redeemer, we have the testimony of the whole blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

2. In his *power*.

Christ not only rose again from the dead, but he ascended up on high; the Father raises him to his own right hand, giving him a name that is above every name, and the Holy Ghost becomes according to the covenant of redemption, his spirit.

But as he was crucified in our nature, and as he rose from the dead in our nature, so he ascended to heavenly power in our nature. He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, the man Christ Jesus. The Immanuel receives his power, as he derived his resurrection, from the consent and covenant of the adorable Trinity; and this power is given him for the deliverance and protection of his people from all their enemies and difficulties.

The christian, after he is quickened together with Christ, has yet to contend with many enemies, to meet with many temptations, and to bear many afflictions, before he reaches the consummation of his hope.

Behold, then, the excellence of his living Redeemer.

The Son of God, in his power, is yet his kinsman. He still wears his human nature. He remembers his own conflicts, his own temptations, his own sorrows. He can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Beneath his crown of glory, are the scars of the thorns. The hand that grasps his sceptre bears the print of the nail. The feet, at which all heaven is prostrate, show the past torture of the cross. Nay, in his blessed heart, the spear has left its deep trace of insult Nowhere may the believer go in the suffering of trial but the Redeemer has gone before him. He knows that his Redeemer liveth—that he liveth his elder brother, his sympathizing friend, his Savior in power, mighty to sustain by his own almighty arm. The living Redeemer is mighty to save by his intercession with the Father. He is now near to his Father, as the acknowledged and sufficient atoner. He is near to his Father as his only begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased. He shows to his Father the proofs of his passion—the deeds of his righteousness. By his own infinite mind he enters deep into the Father's counsels. Can he plead in vain? Thus, then, the believer is always sure of welcome access to the throne of grace, that he may obtain mercy and find grace to help him in every time of need. The ascended Redeemer,

is our new and *living* way, our sure and ever ready deliverer, for, "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

The living Redeemer is head over all things to his church. Not an angel of heaven but is at his command, not an evil spirit but quails at his name, not an operation of nature or of providence but is controlled and ordered by his will. But above all, the infinite and adorable Holy Spirit graciously condescends to be the Spirit of Christ. And all this is for his church, all this is for every believer that loves and trusts his promise. What then can prevail against him who puts his trust in a living Redeemer's power? Living near to the living One, he has providence as his guard, nature as his property, heaven as his servant, hell at his feet, and God within him.

3. In his *glory*.

God made man for glory. He crowned him with power. He made him a little lower than the angels. He admitted him to his intimate love and communion. But sin has lost man this fair inheritance of glory, and power, and dignity, and divine love. Death—the death of the body, with the sicknesses, and pains, and infirmities that go before, and the corruption and eternal anguish that follow after, the death of the soul, with its pollution in this life and despair in that which is to come—death, temporal and eternal, has taken the place of primeval excellence. It is the office of the living Redeemer to restore this inheritance, and that he will accomplish his purpose, we have a blessed earnest, for "we see Jesus," our kinsman, "who," in our stead, "was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor." Sin lost us our inheritance. Christ, by his sufficient atonement, takes away the sin of every believer; with his perfect righteousness, he buys back our lost possession, and, as our kinsman Redeemer, he enters for us, our forérunner, into the second paradise of God. In the glory of the God-man, you behold the final and certain glory of all his redeemed. How glorious is his risen body! The favored three beheld it upon Tabor, and, by faith, we all behold it in heaven. How lustrous now is the countenance of the Son of Mary? Can this be the face that was channelled with tears, and convulsed with grief? How radiance beams from that form that here was weary and worn, an hungered and athirst—that was buffetted and spit upon—that staggered beneath the cross—that with strong shudderings making the earth to quake, gave up the ghost—that lay supine in the arms of weeping friends, and cold in the rocky tomb? Yes, believers, this was he who was dead, and now is alive again for evermore. He that plucked out the sting from death has ravished the victory from the grave. He suffers no more, weeps no more, shall die no more. His new life is an immortal youth.

Thus shall all his redeemed arise. Death may triumph over them for a time, and the worm feed upon their flesh. Yet, their Redeemer liveth, and he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, and call forth their corruption to incorruption, their mortal to immortality. In their flesh shall they see God. Their adoption shall be complete, their

bodies shall be redeemed, the whole man shall be received into glory, and as Moses and Elias, the patterns of perfect redemption, shone in glory like the Lord's on the holy mount, so shall all the redeemed be radiant with the Redeemer's glory for ever more.

The man Christ Jesus has entered heaven. The redeemed body and soul of man can live there, for there our kinsman made like unto us, lives. There he has gone to prepare places for them. There he will receive them unto himself, pure in body, pure in soul, again to walk with God among trees that never shall fade, and in a communion without shame or remorse. The soul shall drink in the divine teachings. No angel shall guard the tree of life, no death follow the appetite ever strong but ever satisfied by the tree of knowledge. The blood of the Paschal Lamb is sprinkled upon the lintels of the everlasting gates, and death shall enter there no more for ever.

As the Redeemer lives in glory immortal and incorruptible, so shall they live who put their trust in a living Redeemer. They are members of his glorious body, as they have been crucified with him by faith on the cross. While the head lives, they shall live. They are one with Christ for ever. He remains for ever king unto God, and the crown upon the head of Jesus is the coronation of his body the church. For ever does he minister unto God, a high priest offering holy and happy sacrifices of praise, and the mitre on the head sanctifies the whole body to an immortal priesthood. Yes, assuredly as Jesus our kinsman is glorious in his person, his kingdom and his priesthood, so glorious shall be they who trust in a Living Redeemer, and their glory shall have no end.

How excellent is our Living Redeemer! How blessed a thing it is now to know that our Redeemer liveth! To rely upon his atonement for our sins, his deliverance from our dangers, his redemption of our immortal blessedness! To believe and to share in his resurrection from the grave, his power upon the throne, and his glory with the Father.

Christian, know that your Redeemer liveth! O let none hesitate, however sinful or unworthy they may be, to rely upon the sufficiency of that atonement which exhausted death, was accepted by the Father, and is applied by the Spirit. Let none doubt, however weak and erring they may be, the security of their souls and the comfort of their hearts amidst all trial, and temptation, and sorrow, who have a living Redeemer, sympathizing with them in heaven, interceding for them with the Father, and ready to impart all power, even his own almighty and divine spirit, to those who trust his grace.

Let none refuse to bear with patience all the seeming ills of this life, to work with an untiring courage all the will of God, and to educate their spirits in holy knowledge, and love, and praise, when they may, through the living Redeemer, obtain incorruption, immortality, eternal dignity, and perpetual joy in holy praise.

But let all remember, none can have a part in the living Redeemer who have not put their trust in his cross, for the pardon of all their sins.

None can share in that atonement if they be not quickened unto a new life of holiness, by the power of the spirit of God.

None can prevail over sin and the tempter, who look not for grace to Christ upon his throne.

None shall enter into heaven at the resurrection of the just whom the blood of Christ has not washed, the spirit of Christ has not sanctified, and the power of Christ has not sustained.

Terrible shall be the fate of those who will not sue for pardon, though the blood of the Redeemer cleanses from all sin.

Who continue in wickedness, though the Holy Ghost stands ready to assist their repentance. Who never pray, though Christ lives to intercede. Terrible shall be their fate who thus despise and provoke the living Redeemer, for he who now lives to bless, will then live to take vengeance on the transgressors, and while the penitent believer enters into the joy of his Lord, they shall be crushed beneath the wrath of the Lamb whose vengeance is as eternal as his love.

O, then, careless soul, know that the Redeemer liveth. Make him your Redeemer. Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace.

GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN.

"LET us then, my hearers, attempt this adventurous flight. Let us follow the path by which our blessed Savior ascended to heaven, and soar upward to the great capital of the universe, to the palace, and the throne of its greater King. As we rise, the earth fades away from our view; now we leave worlds, and suns, and systems behind us. Now we reach the utmost limits of creation; now the last star disappears, and no ray of created light is seen. But a new light now begins to dawn and brighten upon us. It is the light of heaven, which pours in a flood of glory from its wide open gates, spreading continual meridian day, far and wide through the regions of etherial space. Passing swiftly onward through this flood of day, the songs of heaven begin to burst upon your ears, and voices of celestial sweetness, yet loud as the sound of many waters and of mighty thunderings, are heard exclaiming, Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Blessing, and glory, and honor, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever. A moment more, and you have passed the gates; you are in the midst of the city, you are before the eternal throne, you are in the immediate presence of God, and all his glories are blazing around you like a consuming fire. Flesh and blood cannot support it; your bodies dissolve into their original dust, but your immortal souls remain, and

stand naked spirits before the great Father of spirits. Nor, in losing their tenements of clay, have they lost the powers of perception. No; they are now all eye, all ear, nor can you close the eyelids of the soul, shut out for a moment the dazzling, overpowering splendors, which surround you, and which appear like light condensed, like glory which may be felt. You see, indeed, no form or shape; and yet your whole souls perceive, with intuitive clearness and certainty, the immediate, awe-inspiring presence of Jehovah. You see no countenance; and yet you feel as if a countenance of awful majesty, in which all the perfections of divinity shone forth, were beaming upon you wherever you turn. You see no eye: and yet a piercing, heart-searching eye, an eye of omniscient purity, every glance of which goes through your souls like a flash of lightning, seems to look upon you from every point of surrounding space. You feel as if enveloped in an atmosphere, or plunged in an ocean of existence, intelligence, perfection, and glory; an ocean, of which your laboring minds can take in only a drop; an ocean, the depth of which you cannot fathom, and the breadth of which you can never fully explore. But while you feel utterly unable to comprehend this infinite Being, your views of him, so far as they extend, are perfectly clear and distinct. You have the most vivid perceptions, the most deeply graven impressions, of an infinite, eternal, spotless mind, in which the images of all things, past, present, and to come, are most harmoniously seen, arranged in the most perfect order, and defined with the nicest accuracy: of a mind, which wills with infinite ease, but whose volitions are attended by a power omnipotent and irresistible, and which sows worlds, suns and systems through the fields of space, and with far more facility, than the husbandman scatters his seed upon the earth;—of a mind, whence have flowed all the streams, which ever watered any part of the universe with life, intelligence, holiness, or happiness, and which is still full, overflowing and inexhaustible. You perceive also, with equal clearness and certainty, that this infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, all-wise, all-creating mind is perfectly and essentially holy, a pure flame of holiness, and that, as such, he regards sin with unutterable, irreconcilable detestation and abhorrence. With a voice, which reverberates through the wide expanse of his dominions, you hear him saying, as the Sovereign and Legislator of the universe, Be ye holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy. And you see his throne surrounded, you see heaven filled by those only, who perfectly obey this command. You see thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand of angels and archangels, pure, exalted, glorious intelligences, who reflect his perfect image, burn like flames of fire with zeal for his glory, and seem to be so many concentrations of wisdom, knowledge, holiness, and love; a fit retinue for the thrice holy Lord of hosts, whose holiness and all-filling glory they unceasingly proclaim."—*Dr. Payson.*

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 8. Vol. XVI.) AUGUST, 1842. (Whole No. 188.

SERMON CCCXXIX.

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BRAINTREE, MASS.

Preached before the Pastoral Association of Massachusetts, at Boston, May 24th, 1842.

MINISTERIAL ZEAL.

"But it is good to be zealously affected always, in a good thing."—Galatians iv., 18.

This is general instruction, pertinently addressed to all mankind. The apostle directs it to his christian brethren of Galatia, and through them to such in every generation, as call upon the name of the Lord.

It admits, however, of special application to the ministers of Christ. Their station, though honorable, is crowded with dangers. They are of like passions as other men, whether stimulated by hope or enervated by fear—elated with pride, or fired by ambition—corroded by envy or depressed by shame—they are exposed to the pressure of temptation on every side to intermit those labors for the regeneration of the world, in which lie all their honor and happiness.

There is dignity in their official character. They bear the embassy of heaven to earth. Their investiture with office is from God himself. It becomes them to magnify it; it gives them influence widely penetrating the bosoms of men, and of healthful or disastrous character, according to the fidelity with which its duties are discharged. At infinite hazard is the authority that binds them to activity overlooked, and indulgence given to the love of ease and the spirit of indifference to the results of their ministry. "How many ministers," says one, "lie down in their laziness, and wretchedly neglect their duties to better themselves and benefit others by preaching the gospel! Idleness enervates and unstrings the bent of the Spirit; the mind is benumbed by a useless and ignoble dullness!"

I say not that "idleness" and "dullness" are characteristic of the ministry of reconciliation at the present day. However *individuals* may be liable to such a charge, it is obviously untrue of the great body of those who sustain the office. Still, it has never been impertinent, nor is it now, to address them in the language of the text—"It is good to be zealously affected always, in a good thing." And assembled as we are this day, "to stir up each other's minds by way of remem-

brance" of the responsibilities resting upon us, and standing upon common ground before God and "the whole assembly and church of the first born,"—with the solemnities of death, judgment, and eternity gathering around us, you will permit me, diffidently but plainly, to express my views,

I. Of the importance of the work in which ministers are engaged.

II. Of the zeal with which it should be prosecuted, and

III. Of the motives that should influence their course.

I. The importance of the work in which ministers are engaged. Need I say that it takes hold on eternity, and affects the destiny of the undying soul? It involves the success of *Christ's* mission to earth, and the glory of the *Father*. In its results are bound up the interests of all holy intelligences.

The world is in *darkness*—and it belongs to the ministers of God to enlighten it, by reflecting the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, far and wide. By them is the whole truth of God to be declared, his will explained, his authority enforced, and his counsels urged with constancy and power.

The world lies in *wickedness*. Errors abound. Vice prevails. Idolatry and superstition cover the earth. Violence and destruction are cried through the world. Blood and carnage stain every page of man's history. And whence comes relief? *Reason* has labored in vain and spent its strength for naught these 6000 years; civil law, sustained by public opinion, by constitutional authority, and even by despotic power, has effected no more than to impose a temporary and partial restraint on the discordant passions of men; philosophy, learning, eloquence, all are impotent to purify and ennoble man's moral sentiments. The ministry of reconciliation alone can effect it, by laying open the heart to self-inspection, by enlightening and arousing the conscience, by exposing the devices of the wicked one—and by reiterating continually the demands of *God* in all their fulness and variety, and in all the terribleness of their sanctions. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart,"—"and thy neighbor as thyself," are fundamental laws of God's moral kingdom, which fall powerless on the ear, except from the lips of heaven-commissioned messengers.

The world is under *condemnation*. The curse of God is on it. Burning wrath is kindled; the cup of indignation is filling up, and its overflow must wrap every labor and every hope of man in consuming fire—a fire that can never be quenched! To proclaim this fearful fact—to indicate the way of escape—to urge the duty of humiliation—to unveil the glories of the God incarnate, and conduct the guilty to the Fountain filled from Emanuel's veins, is the high office of God's ministry.

And then, the Lord God hath chosen a *special* people unto himself, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a *peculiar* people to show forth his praise. This "flock of God" is to be *fed* with knowledge and understanding, with the pure milk of the word, or with strong meat, as they may be able to bear it, and not with the soiled waters of strife, or the dry bones of a vain philosophy. As Moses guided the people of Israel

through the wilderness like a flock by the skilfulness of his hand, so it belongs to the minister of God in all generations, to lead his flock into green pastures and beside still waters, directing their movements wisely, and defending them from the boar out of the wood and the wild beast of the field, till they reach that

"———land of pure delight
Where saints immortal reign."

Deeper counsels than those of man indeed, determine the condition, the duties, the consolations, and the destiny of the church. For before the world began, she occupied the thoughts, and engrossed the love of the Eternal Mind. And in her bosom dwells the Holy Spirit, cherishing the same principles of hallowed action that guided the steps of her Redeemer; and angels love to minister to her sons and daughters as when they hastened Lot from Sodom, released Peter from prison, conducted Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, and revealed the purposes of God to the exile of Patmos. Still the treasures of truth and consolation are committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and that he may be glorified while man is humbled. On the ministers of God it devolves to go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed the kids beside the shepherd's tents.

"He is the man by God
The Lord commissioned to make known to men
The eternal counsels:———to offer terms
Of pardon, grace, and peace,
To teach the ignorant soul: to cheer the sad;
To give the feeble strength, the hopeless hope;
To help the halting, and to lead the blind;
To warn the careless, heal the sick of heart,
Arouse the indolent, and on the proud
And obstinate offender, to denounce—the wrath of God."

In a word—to him it belongs to advance "the everlasting kingdom of God,"—to dissipate the darkness of the world and diffuse the light of heaven—to remove the curse from the habitations of men, and put into the lips of earth's perishing millions that song of salvation, whose echo shall draw forth the Alleluias of the myriads about the throne.

II. The zeal with which this labor ought to be prosecuted.

It has its *foundation* in unfeigned piety toward God—a heartfelt conviction of evangelical truth—and habitual communion with the realities of the invisible world. Unless the piety of the minister be *sincere*, like Hophni and Phinehas, he will make the sacrifice of the Lord to be abhorred, and the worship of the sanctuary to be abandoned. Unless it be *fervent* too, he will never declare the counsels of God with the spirit that "makes the very stones to weep," nor elevate the standard of christian character, so as to command the co-operation of his brethren, and inspire the confidence of the unbelieving. Do not the peculiarities of his station bind him to eminent holiness? And has he not every advantage to attain it?

A main support of ministerial zeal is *knowledge*. That the man of

God may be perfect, he must be thoroughly *furnished;* from a child he must have known the holy scriptures; and have learned experimentally that they are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge." So has God ordained. An acquaintance with the oracles of God, in the languages which originally conveyed them to men—and an acquaintance with the sciences, and with polite literature—with the history of nature, and of man, in all his generations, is of no small value to the minister of God. If the priests of ancient idolatry devoted themselves, within the seclusion of their temples, to the study of their religions, fabulous and chaotic as they were, in order to maintain their influence over the deluded population—how much more should the minister of Christ be careful to bring forth from his treasures things new and old for the conviction of the unbeliever and the edification of the saints! If Apelles kept his vigils, and touched and retouched his pictures without weariness, under the vain impression that he labored for *eternity*—how much more does it become the servant of God, assured that the fruit of his labors will survive the shock of elements and the crush of worlds, to use diligence in storing his mind with all the knowledge that will aid him to illustrate and enforce those everlasting truths, by which alone man can be made wise unto salvation!

Nor can ministerial zeal be maintained without fervent and effectual *prayer;* it is the breath of the renovated spirit—and the indispensable guardian of the soul in its approaches to the tree of knowledge. The man who spent three hours a day in communion with God, might say with *authority*, that "to pray well is to study well," especially when the devotions of the closet taught him to unsheathe the sword of the Spirit, and foil principalities and powers. If the heathen orator, who used to thunder and lighten in his harangues, and move the public mind at his pleasure, yet never ventured to speak in the forum, till he had first besought the gods to assist him—shall the christian preacher presume to come before his congregation, without first invoking assistance from on high? "An undevout astronomer is mad;" how much more an undevout preacher of the eternal truths of Revelation! The hosts of Amalek had never been routed, nor the plague in the camp of Israel stayed, nor the sun arrested over Gibeon, nor the life of Hezekiah lengthened, nor the salvation of Josiah effected, but by fervent prayer! And shall any zeal of the servant of God save souls from death and hide a multitude of sins, if it be not sustained by the spirit of devotion?

Prudence is a close companion of true ministerial zeal. "No divinity is absent, if prudence be present," was the maxim of the heathen sage. "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves," is heaven's injunction, never abrogated, though often forgotten. But while in private life, the minister of God should walk circumspectly, and in his public ministrations choose out acceptable words, and in all his intercourse with mankind adapt himself to their ever varying prejudices and caprices in matters involving no sacrifice of moral principle, he is equally bound to avoid the dissimulation of Peter, and the time-serving policy of the pusillanimous Staupitz. Let him be "full of eyes, before and behind"—but let

him no more timidly shrink from duty than plunge headlong into difficulties of his own creation.

Self-denying and heavenly too is the spirit of the zealous minister. He keeps under the body, and brings it into subjection. He mortifies lust, and bears the cross. A "voluntary humility" he shuns indeed—nor emulates the penances of Francis or Loyola, nor submits to the self-inflicted tortures of the priests of Baal, Thor, or Boodh;—but irregular desires he suppresses—unhallowed passions he extinguishes, and aims to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. It was the saying of the Jewish Rabbins, that "the spirit of prophecy resides not with any man whose affections are not raised above the world, and fixed on heaven." And certain it is, that the spirit of the gospel ministry dwells not in any man, who "says to the gold, thou art my hope, and to the fine gold, thou art my confidence"—nor in him whose grand incentive to action is found in the incense of popular applause. Shall the sons of Zion, whom God hath clothed in scarlet, embrace the dunghill? Shall they teach others to set their affections on things above and set their own on things beneath? He that, like Moses, has seen the glory of the Lord on the mount that burned with fire—or like the disciples, gazed upon Jesus transfigured before them, and heard the voice from the excellent glory, is tempted in vain to worship the golden calf, or accept the thirty pieces of silver. The charms of the world vanish. The glitter of gold dazzles the eye no more. The voice of the tempter falls powerless on the ear, and anticipations of glory, honor, and immortality, ravish the soul. Truth fixes its seal on the saying of Augustine—"*Leave* all, and you shall find all; for everything is to be found in God, by him who for the *sake* of God leaveth everything."

Love, too, ranks high among the elements of ministerial zeal. Though one "speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge," he speaks in vain, if love warm not his heart. "I love," says Fenelon, "the preacher who speaks for my sake and not his own; who seeks my salvation, not his own vain glory;" Moses cries, "blot my name I pray thee out of thy book;" Paul could wish himself accursed from Christ, for his brethren's sake; and JESUS laid down his life, that he might save the world. Blessed examples! and when the zeal of God's house eats up his ministers, their labors will be begun, continued, and ended in *love*. Love will prompt their prayers in the closet—their conversation at the fireside, their investigations in the study, and their instructions from the pulpit. No instrument of assault on the battlements of hell is effective like this. In vain does Rome attempt the subjugation of the fierce Northumbrians to the faith of Jesus by intrigue, and learning, and weapons of blood; but when she sends forth the solitary monk Aiden, unarmed, and full of the spirit of tenderness and affection, prejudice melts away before him, and the heart of the barbarian softens, till he pours forth the earnest prayer, *lead me to Jesus!* There is a love, that many waters cannot quench nor floods drown; and when it animates the bosom of the Lord's servant, it inspires a zeal which earth and hell oppose in vain.

Fortitude and *activity* also enter deeply into ministerial zeal. If the grandeur of the object, filling the eye of the minister, admits of no comparison with aught that is earthly, so the weight of his responsibilities, and the greatness of his labors, have no parallel among the responsibilities and labors of the children of this world. He has enemies to encounter and difficulties to overcome that lie in the pathway of no other man. Within him, and about him, and beneath him, opposing influences rise up, sufficient to overwhelm any spirit unsustained by power from on high. His own strength is weakness—his wisdom folly. Evil passions agitate him. Inward corruption affrights him. The conflict rages between the law of the mind and the law in the members, till often he exclaims, "O wretched man that I am!" And *then*, he meets brazen-faced ignorance at every turn—stubborn prejudice—fixed enmity to God—confirmed habits of sin—abounding errors in forms as various and in spirit as malignant as the gods of the heathen—wiles and stratagems as numerous as the inventive genius of Apollyon can devise—all to be overpowered and cast out of the way ere he can raise the shout of victory, and lay aside his armor.

If the soldier would be crowned with laurels—if the politician or the statesman would wield a permanent influence over a nation's destinies—if the merchant, the mechanic, or the husbandman, would reap a golden harvest from their toils, they must cherish the spirit that never tires, the energy that never yields, the courage that never fails, in the presence of difficulties however formidable. *More* necessary far, is a fortitude that no adversity can subdue, and an activity that no labors can exhaust, in the leaders of God's sacramental host. Accumulated obloquy and reproach must be patiently borne—the indifference of friends must be calmly overlooked—the treachery and violence of enemies must be quietly anticipated—the meanness and subtleness of sectarian animosity—the scorn and virulence of infidelity undisguised—the effrontery and madness of radicalism, and the fiendish blasphemies that flow out from human hearts against the God of heaven, have always marked the history of Zion, and summoned her defenders to earnest conflict and patient endurance. But under the guidance of the hallowed zeal that animated prophets and apostles, they have never been diverted from their course of beneficent efforts, nor betrayed into a base surrender of the interests committed to their charge. But ready to become all things to all men that some might be saved—cheerfully sacrificing private interest for the prosperity of Zion, and counting it all joy to fall into divers temptations, and suffer an eclipse of their own glory in the increasing splendors of the Son of Righteousness, they have gone onward from conquering to conquer.

Who admires not the spirit of Moses, when, descending the mount, and saluted with the shouts of the idolatrous multitude, he broke in pieces the tables of the law, in token of his zeal for the honor of Jehovah! or the spirit of Elijah, when left alone, as he supposed, among the thousands of Israel, he addressed himself in terms of unmeasured severity to Ahab and Jezebel, and the priests of Baal! or the spirit of Paul and Barnabas, when waxing bold against the envious and blas-

pheming Jews, they exclaimed—"seeing ye put the word of God from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles!" What fortitude, what heroism, what simple reliance on the guardianship of heaven was here! "Many bulls compassed them, strong bulls of Bashan beset them round, who gaped upon them with their mouths as a ravening and roaring lion." But their zeal for the Lord of hosts sustained them! Nor unlike this was the spirit of Ambrose, when he withheld the consecrated elements from the haughty Theodosius, who had imbrued his hands in innocent blood; and the spirit of the venerable Moody, who preferred imprisonment and banishment from his flock, to the prostitution of his office and the desecration of the sacred symbols, at the command of the profligate Canfield. But why enumerate examples of heroic fortitude, when they brighten every page of christian history, and derive their sanction from Him who drove the money-changers and them that sold doves from the temple, with scourge in hand, and then laid down his life further to attest his zeal for God!

"Had you all the philosophy of Socrates, the knowledge of Plato, and the morals of Epictetus; were you furnished with all the flowing oratory of Cicero, and with the thunder of Demosthenes; and could you employ all these talents in every sermon you preach, yet could you have no reasonable hope of saving one soul, apart from the spirit of hallowed zeal." And undeniably it is the *will of God* that his ministers be as a flaming fire, and not as dead coals, nor even as *live* ones, covered up in *ashes*. In every good thing, let them be "zealously affected." To give men deliverance from the second death, by directing them in season and out of season to the Lamb of God, and by pealing in their ears the thunders of a violated law, demands a fortitude and earnestness that no frowns of power can intimidate and no allurements of favor diminish. "I have discharged my conscience, and leave the event with God," said Cromwell's intrepid chaplain, while the Protector's cheek colored with anger. And the terrible blast of the trumpet blown by Knox, what ire did it arouse—what threatenings of vengeance did it inspire—yea, and what tremblings too, throughout the hosts of the aliens—but the sculptured stone reveals the whole—"He feared not the face of clay."

Aside from a spirit like this, the highest order of talents will accomplish little. Let the cause of the Reformation, three hundred years ago, have been committed to the hands of Erasmus, or even to the purer hands of the gentle Melancthon, and it had died in its birth. It required the dauntless courage of a Luther, and the intrepid zeal of a Zwingle, to sustain it against the whole ecclesiastical and civil power of Europe; and, combined with these, it demanded the caution of the wise Frederick, the indefatigable labors of the immortal Calvin, and the sleepless vigilance of thousands who counted not their lives dear to them that they might restore to Zion her pristine beauty, and dissipate the cloud which God had thrown over her in his anger!

Entering essentially, then, into that ZEAL which heaven approves, is

the spirit of unfeigned piety—the love of various knowledge, prayfulness, prudence, self-denial, and heavenly mindedness, ardent love of the truth, and unflinching fortitude and activity in urging the claims of the gospel. "It is good to be zealously affected always, in a good thing."

But injustice would be done to the subject, were it not stated distinctly that there is also "a zeal which is not according to knowledge," a wild and ignorant fanaticism, which rejects alike the controlling power of reason, common sense, and the word of God, a phrenzy of the mind which sometimes leads men into the fire and then into the water, while yet on their way to Jesus. It is the spirit of Münzer, the self-styled servant of the Lord, when calling on the peasantry of Mansfield, to "arise and fight the battle of the Lord," he said, "heed not the cries of the ungodly!—be you pitiless; fire-burns,—let your swords be even tinged with blood!—work while it is day!" It is the spirit of the Israelitish captain, who said, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts" —a spirit of self-glorification, whose chief characteristics are spiritual pride, self-ignorance, vanity, contempt of the teachings of experience, thirst for power, contumelious scorn of those whose opinions conflict with their own, and violent denunciation of all who question their measures. It is the spirit of Ignatius Loyola, or Emanuel Swedenborg, who, rapt in an ecstasy of motionless abstraction, enjoy those revelations of heavenly mysteries that supersede the disclosures of the word of God, and inspire undoubting confidence in dreams and apparitions, and give to visionary delusions the force of divinely authenticated truths. It is the same spirit that in some assumes the form of the gift of tongues, in others, the power of working miracles; and in others still, a knowledge of the day when God shall come to judge men and destroy the world. Its forms are indefinitely diversified, but its nature and object are invariably the same—*to glorify self, and enjoy it for ever!* It drags the monarch from the throne to the cloister, and for sumptuous fare and mirthful minstrelsy, gives him the brown crust, the hard ground, the frequent flagellations, and the long groans of the ascetic. It drives the peasant from his honest and honorable *toil*, into the workshops of idleness, or the strifes of the battle-field. It makes the wise man a fool, and persuades the simpleton that heaven has commissioned *him* to rectify all the disorders of the world. It fires the layman with an inextinguishable desire for preeminence above his brethren and the ministers of God, and it flatters the minister, that *he* has but to speak the word, and thousands shall be converted to the faith.

True zeal is tender as well as bold. It is modest and affectionate. It is humble and devout—gentle and beneficent—meek and unobtrusive. Overlooking self-honor and interest, its aims are high as heaven, and far reaching as eternity. But false zeal is reckless and fierce—daring and denunciatory—pharisaical and lofty in its pretensions to superior sanctity and skill. Like the fabled Briareus of fifty heads and a hundred hands, it aims to climb the heavens and teach the Great Eter-

mal how to manage more wisely the complicated affairs of this revolted province of his empire. It works not the glory of God nor the welfare of man, but creates a fiendish delight throughout the realms of darkness and death, by multiplying the victims of delusion, and binding them over in chains to the power of the adversary, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

III. The motives that should influence their course.

1. The intimacy of their *relations* to their fellow men.

Whatever circumstantial distinctions may exist in the human family, all men are *brethren*. Have they not one father? Have they not the same paternal instruction, and the same gracious encouragement to filial duty?

They are fellow *servants*, too, of the same *master*, and are placed in the same wide field of labor, subjected to similar toils, difficulties, changes, anticipations, and disappointments.

They are also *sufferers* alike, from internal conflicts, from the evil passions of a corrupt world, from the fiery darts of the wicked one, from the assaults of disease, the fear of death, and the blight of every cheering prospect of earthly good.

Their common reliance is on the atoning blood and prevalent intercession of the same High-Priest, and on the wonder working power of the same Spirit; for all alike are by nature children of wrath.

2. The zeal that heaven approves is the only successful antagonist of fanaticism.

Such is the constitution of man, that he is borne along almost resistlessly, in any direction, by the demonstrations of a resolved and energetic spirit. *Assuming* that right is on the side of *courage*—and that the banner now floating on the breeze most proudly, is of course the banner of victory, he confidently unites his destinies with the man who fears nothing and scruples no measures that promise success. Hence the reliance of the military commander, the political chieftain, and the sectarian bigot, on boastful proclamations, and swollen estimates of their resources. Many a battle has been won, many a political contest has been decided, and many a religious sect has triumphed over its rivals, by dint of factitious excitement, thus created. On this principle rests the fame of a Napoleon, a Mazarin, and a Laud. Hence the untoward success of a Beda, whose impetuous spirit and overbearing violence secured to him the advantage in his conflict with the meek and simple hearted Berquin, and enabled him to fasten upon France the yoke of Romanism, under which she has crouched so restlessly for 300 years. "*Fanaticism* finds disciples everywhere," and laughs at ordinary means of resistance. Truth alone, though of heavenly origin, and arrayed in robes of white, is powerless in its presence. The *zeal* that glows in angelic bosoms must attend her. The fire that kindles on heaven's altars must surround her. Her ministers must be zealously affected in all that is good, or she retires from the field of contest to weep in secret places over her discomfiture.

As is the reviler so is the Apostle, as is Mary Magdalen so is Natha-

niel, ere the grace of God, displayed on the cross of Christ, makes the difference.

Through these common relationships, a mighty tide of influence rolls over the world, affecting its destinies, in correspondence with the moral dispositions from which it issues. And let the holy zeal enjoined on ministers of God, be always burning—let it impel to ceaseless vigilance over the interests committed to their charge, and to untiring activity in their labors for the conversion of the world,—and the wisdom of God in committing the treasure of the Gospel to such earthen vessels rather than to superior orders of being, will never be questioned. *But*—they must be "*zealously* affected always," else the end of their commission is not attained, nor will the destruction of whole generations of men be prevented.

3. The possible loss of their own souls.

Who so self-denying, devoted, and warm-hearted, as the Apostle of the Gentiles!—*where* the minister of modern times that dare to claim so large a measure of the spirit of Christ, and so pure a zeal in the cause of human salvation, as he?—and yet, even *he* says—"So fight I *not* as one that beateth the air—lest that by any means, when I have preached unto others, I myself should be a castaway."

Chrysostom hazarded the opinion, that but few ministers of *his* generation would be saved. It was but the opinion of a *man*, and yet not formed rashly, nor uncharitably. Whether ministers are more holy now than then, is known only to the Searcher of hearts. But some things are clear. Their official station, however favorable to unusual attainments in holiness, does not exempt them from pressing dangers. Nothing is easier than the mistake of philosophical speculation for religious experience—of delight in biblical investigation for *love* of the truth—of popular favor for the approbation of *God*—of a zealot-like contention for the *forms* of faith, for an earnest contending for the faith itself—of the movements of animal feeling for the emotions of spiritual life—of copiousness in the language of devotion for fervency of spirit—of mere intellectual efforts, for aspirations of the heart to God—and of success in the ministry, for the seal of heaven on personal piety.

In saving his elect, God often uses instruments in whom he has no complacency. And neither the orthodoxy of one's faith, nor the warmth of his feelings, nor the success that crowns his efforts, forms satisfactory evidence of a personal interest in Christ. He must look *beyond* all this —into the depths of his spirit, and its secret communings with heaven, and its fervors of desire for the salvation of men, ere he can assure himself against the doom of the castaway.

Says a shrewd and intelligent observer of "men and things"—"A Judas may remain for years undetected among his brethren and fellow laborers; and who can say but there may be traitors now, who sell their Master and the souls of men for a piece of money, and yet live unsuspected, and pass off the stage with a fair reputation!" Say not that the suggestion is uncharitable. Is there no reason to fear, that even in the ranks of evangelical religion those may be found,

who care more for the fleece than the flock—more for their ease than the salvation of souls—more for their popularity than the glory of Christ—and more for the interests of denomination than the enlargement of Zion! Why else is there so much of restlessness and complaint—of envying and strife, of indifference and indolence, amid all the conflicts of the church with an unbelieving world! Is there no treachery of heart toward Christ betrayed, when personal considerations are thus allowed to overrule the dictates of conscience and the commands of God? Where the actings of men in the cause of Zion are but spasmodic and occasional—where men look to revivals ONLY as the sources of strength and beauty to Zion—where the affections are habitually earthly, and the eye is "ever downward bent," and souls on their way to perdition, are but feebly instructed and coldly warned—is there not reason for gloomy forebodings? Is such the spirit that heaven approves? Is it prepared to join the song of apostles and martyrs?

4. The minister of God must DIE. Does he *know* it? True. Why, then, is he not always "zealously affected?" The honest hour that overtakes the man of humble occupation, arrests the official dignitary; the iron-nerved hand has hold upon his heartstrings, and while he bows to the "common leveller," what shall sustain his departing spirit?—the reflection, that, like Demas, he hath loved the present world?—that, like Diotrephes, he hath aspired to the pre-eminence?—that, like Hymeneus and Philetus, he hath perverted the word of God to gain himself a name? Will the retrospect of his domestic enjoyments, his literary progress, his hard-earned honors, his influence on the passing morality of the world, the applause of his congregation, the esteem of the learned and the great, or the incense of flattery that has burned on a thousand altars, console him then?

The foundation of his hope is to be examined with thoroughness, and the details of his intercourse with God and man—the motives that have swayed his life—the spirit that has pervaded his closet, his family, his study, his vestry, his pulpit, are to be reviewed, and his call to the sacred office—the vows he made at his induction, and the responsibilities he freely assumed, are to be compared with his subsequent doings; and the grand question is to be settled for the last time in a world of hope—"Am I, or am I not, a follower of the Lamb?"

O! that death-bed scene! On earth there is nothing like it! Whether the monarch or the philosopher die, there is no thrill of agony or delight felt in other worlds like that created by the departure of the minister of God from the scene of his mighty responsibilities. Almost can the eye of sense discern the scroll in the hand of the recording angel, bearing on its flaming page the deeds of the summoned spirit, and the forthcoming sentence—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"—or, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth for ever." The gay drapery of the world falls off—the airy fancies that had filled his imagination vanish away, and the material

universe, like a naked skeleton, stands out before him bearing on its front in broad capitals of lurid light the oft-forgotten truth—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" Around him mingle the angels of light, and the fiends of darkness. Heaven opens. Hell discloses its fiery deeps. All, *all* is *solemnity* now—whether "the angel of mercy" bear the spirit triumphantly upward, or despair seize its victim, and drag him downward to realms of endless night! But,

5. Then comes the day for which all other days were made—when the good man and the mean, the mighty man and the slave, the priest of the altar and the doorkeeper of God's house, shall stand together before the bar of eternal judgment. "O, my soul! hast thou fought the good fight, and kept the faith—has the word of God been within thee as a burning fire, shut up in the bones—hast thou conducted others through tears and prayers up to heaven's gates—have none perished through thy negligence, and love of ease, and fear of man—canst thou meet the Judge of all, and appeal to him, that none have stumbled over thy bad example, formality of service, vain glory and ambition into the world of woe? Hast thou no accusers there, who will testify—"You saw me in the way to hell, and held your peace—you knew me to be thoughtless, and did not warn me—to be presumptuous, and did not rebuke me—to be entangled in the mazes of error and vicious indulgence, and did not extricate me;—if you spoke, it was but to flatter—if you smiled, it was to secure favor—if you labored, it was for the meat that perisheth!" "Ah me! what cursing then is heaped upon my head by ruined souls, that charge me with their murder!"

Brethren! it is no common guilt that attaches to the faithless minister. His opportunities for spiritual improvement, his necessary devotement to sacred studies, his retirement from the more bustling scenes of life, his abundant converse with the pious and illustrious dead of past ages, and the countless motives to fidelity pressing on his conscience, impose on him obligations to eminent piety, stronger far than those resting on other men. And his means of usefulness how vast! The king on his throne wields not a power that stretches so far and wide over eternity as his; and the philosopher, with all his skill in the development of mind or matter, with all his knowledge of the earth or the heavens, can exert no influence that compares with HIS, whose hand grasps the word of the Spirit, wields the thunders of the eternal throne, and scatters the lightnings treasured up in God's storehouse, as he moves abroad among the habitations of men. And can such means of usefulness be misemployed without an accumulation of guilt that exposes to

"Vials of perdition, poured measureless?"

But contrasted with this is the glorious reward of the man who is "always zealously affected" in the work of the ministry. The tears he sheds between the porch and the altar, his fearless movements between the living and the dead, the wrestling agony of his devotions,

his full and earnest annunciations of the truth of God, and his unwearied industry in the work of the Lord, prepare him to shine above the brightness of the firmament, and receive the greetings of the myriads restored to the bliss of heaven by his instrumentality, where he shall enjoy

"The promised crown, the promised throne,
The welcome and approval of his Lord."

SERMON CCCXXX.

BY REV. JOHN MINES, D.D.

MARYLAND,

Preached at Richmond, at the opening of the Synod of Virginia. Published by request.

THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

"By the Holy Ghost."—II. Cor. vi., 6.

The gospel ministry sustain an office highly responsible, and unspeakably important. In the preceding chapter, they are styled "ambassadors for Christ;" and to them "God hath given the ministry of reconciliation." This is then their solemn commission: to transact for God with rebellious man—to reconcile him to his Maker. They are sent forth to proclaim this glorious truth, "that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Never was embassy so momentous; to countless millions, it involves issues of weal or woe, unspeakable and eternal.

The ambassadors are sent forth with special instructions; for "God hath committed unto them the word of reconciliation." Their instructions require them, at their peril, to declare the doctrines which God has taught in his word; to proclaim what he has done, "that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;" and what he is still doing, by his Spirit, to sanctify and save men; to announce his fearful threatenings, and his gracious promises; and to set forth the duties which he requires of man.

In this chapter, the apostle shows how the ambassadors for Christ are to "approve themselves as the ministers of God," in all the trying circumstances, in which they would be placed, in fulfilling their ministry; "in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings."

The phrase rendered "by the Holy Ghost," should be translated "by a holy spirit;" because, by the absence of the article in the Greek, it is left indefinite, and not restricted to the third person of the Godhead, and because the preceding and subsequent clauses all exhibit distinct traits of personal character, by which the ministry are to approve themselves, and seem therefore to demand that this clause should be so applied. We shall, therefore, take this to be the meaning of the apostle, and the correct translation of the passage, and shall so consider it in the present discourse.

The word spirit, when used as expressive of character, denotes the general temper, disposition, and feelings of the soul, directing the actions, and diffusing itself through them, imparting to them its own character, whether it be good or bad. Thus it forms the leading and

prominent feature of a man's character, by which he is distinguished from every other man. Hence the scriptures use such language as this, "The spirit of truth and the spirit of error," a "patient spirit," a "proud spirit," etc. And, in common usage, we characterize men in the same way, as of an angry spirit, a meek spirit, a reckless spirit, a cautious spirit, and the like.

A holy spirit, in the ministry, is that habitual temper and feeling of the soul, which stamps a character of holiness on all their actions, and not a particular grace or act distinct from others. In short, it is the manner of their thinking, feeling, and acting in all things, agreeably to the word of truth and the divine will. To "approve themselves as the ministers of God," is, by their spirit and deportment to prove themselves to be such; and thus to show themselves worthy of approval.

Our text inculcates a holy spirit in the ministry of the gospel. The subject presents itself in a twofold aspect: the *one*, as it embraces their spirit toward God; and the *other*, as regards their spirit toward men.

I. The minister of the gospel must feel and exhibit a spirit of devotion to God. This spirit will pervade all the feelings, affections and homage which we offer to God. The Spirit of God, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of divine truth, gives us just apprehensions of the glorious character of God in Jesus Christ, and these views excite correspondent feelings in us, such as godly fear, profound reverence, deep humility, ardent love, filial confidence, holy adoration, and grateful praise. This spirit will delight in God's holy word and ordinances; in prayer and worship, and in communion with him. There is a habitual going out of the soul toward God, to receive more of his fullness, and render unto him according to the benefits received. Where this spirit reigns, there will be found an anxious concern for the glory of God and his honor in the world; that his name may be revered and his laws obeyed. This spirit will subdue selfish and worldly thoughts and purposes. It will diffuse itself through all the thoughts and feelings of the man, controlling and directing them; and will be seen pervading all his actions. The piety of a minister of the gospel should be intelligent, deep, ardent, and active; and ever characterized by a spirit devout, humble, and submissive to God.

A holy spirit of piety and devotion is an *essential* qualification of an ambassador for Christ. It approves him "as the minister of God," and commands an influence among men; because he thus proves himself to be in reality what the sacred office requires him to be. No talents, eloquence, nor zeal can be an acceptable substitute for this. The minister of God should carry the heavenly unction of this spirit from the closet to the family altar; from the family altar to the pulpit; and from the pulpit to his daily intercourse with souls. This spirit, cherished and animated by the Holy Ghost, can alone prompt him to the habitual discharge of his duties as a man, and make his self-denial and arduous duties, as a minister of God, both easy and delightful. And while he is careful to furnish his mind with stores of knowledge,

that he may draw from his "treasury things both new and old," he must be more than careful, he must be anxious, that, by the help of the Spirit of the Lord, his heart may be enriched with all the heavenly graces. In a word, he should feel, and feel at all times, that his all is *in* God, and *from* God, both for his personal holiness and happiness, and for his official fidelity and usefulness.

II. A holy spirit in the minister of the gospel has respect also to his fellow men, and may be denominated a spirit of benevolence. He should entertain an affectionate feeling for the church of Christ, as his body, the depository of his glory on earth, and the "light of the world." His sympathy with her should lead the minister of God to feel, as did the captives at Babylon: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Or, with David, to pray, "peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, peace be within thee." The purity, peace, and efficiency of the church lie near his heart. When he sees Zion in tribulation, he suffers with her; when her ways mourn, his soul is pained within him. He earnestly desires to see all her children "dwelling together in unity;" her "priests clothed with salvation;" and herself "looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." His spirit is as the spirit of Isaiah, who resolved, "for Zion's sake will I not hold my peace; and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

1. The minister of God should feel a spirit of benevolence toward the impenitent. They are "condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on them." They are liable every moment to become the prey of the "worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." God, in his rich mercy, has given them a Savior and a day of grace; and in this short, and to them, uncertain day, is involved their eternal destiny, and yet, as they seem unmoved by their perilous condition, the minister of God cannot be unconcerned; he feels for them, and weeps and prays over them. While they are stiff-necked and rebellious, he is bowed down under a view of their sin and danger. Like afflicted Jeremiah, he often cries out, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." Or, in the language of Queen Esther, he cries in agony to God, "How can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" In the spirit of benevolence and commiseration, the minister of the gospel feels, in some measure, as God feels, and exhorts perishing sinners, in the words of God; "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" And when he sees multitudes still regardless of God, and reckless of their own ever-

lasting interests, he adopts the language of the compassionate Jehovah, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" Nothing is more painful to the minister of God than to be compelled, by the persevering obduracy of sinners, to give up the hope of their salvation. When he sees their hardness of heart, and considers the destruction which awaits them, and which may be very near, his feelings are similar to those of the compassionate Jesus, who, "when he was come near Jerusalem, beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Nevertheless, God saith unto his minister, "Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." Their sin and danger must be set before them; the infinite fullness of the atonement, and the free invitations of the gospel. "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," must be urged upon them as immediate duties. They must be told, and told often, that the only hindrance to their salvation is the total depravity of their hearts, their love of sin, and their opposition to the holy requirements of the gospel. They must be taught their indispensable need of the influences of the Spirit of God, for renovation and sanctification, and his willingness to work in them. They must be left, as the scriptures have left them, without excuse for their impenitency and unbelief. And they must be left under the conviction, that, if they perish, they perish by their own voluntary act.

2. The minister of God should feel a spirit of benevolence for the whole world. He sees that, with a small deduction, "the world lieth in wickedness." He contemplates with pain the ignorance, error, superstition, idolatry, and wretchedness of the nations that are pagan. He beholds the unyielding prejudices of the blinded Jews; the millions clinging to a grossly corrupted christianity; and the thousands of thousands devoted to the false prophet. The philosopher may devise schemes of reformation, but "hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" The mere philanthropist may look on this spectacle, and weep, but he has no adequate remedy. The minister of God feels as Paul felt at Athens, "and his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." He then feels it to be his duty, his honor, and his privilege, to aid in marshalling "the sacramental host of God's elect," and leading them on to evangelical triumph, "with the weapons of our warfare, which are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds." The Lord is his strength, and his shield, who hath said, "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God;" "all shall know me from the least to the greatest;" and who hath said of Zion, "The gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." These are some of the promises of God, for the enlargement of his church; and on these his minister relies, assured that the "gates of hell shall not prevail against her;" but that she shall increase, till "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." The "world lying in wickedness,"

calls for ardent benevolence of spirit, and untiring labors, while the promises and the grace of God give full assurance of final and complete success.

3. The minister of God must approve himself as such by a spirit of charity. He must be "given to hospitality." He is not to neglect the temporal wants or bodily sufferings of others, when it is in his power to supply the one, and to assuage or remove the other. I, however, propose to consider the spirit of charity in its more extensive sense. The minister of God must be charitable in judging the opinions and actions of other men. The spirit of charity will lead him to put the most favorable construction on both, that the case will, in truth, permit. The Apostle Paul has given us a most attractive description of this heavenly grace. Amongst other characteristics, he says, "Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." "And (he adds) now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." The spirit of charity will neither bring a false accusation against any, nor designedly aggravate that which is just. This spirit is utterly opposed to a censorious, fault-finding spirit, that would vauntingly boast of its possessors, "Ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you;" and would confidently erect them into infallible oracles of truth, and unerring standards of right, and would say in its heart, "stand by thyself; come not near to me; for I am holier than thou."

An uncharitable spirit is a selfish, exclusive spirit. It has done much, and continues to do much, to destroy the unity of Christ's church, to mar her beauty, and to hinder her prosperity. This spirit, so unlike the spirit of the gospel, is sometimes seen, even in good men. It manifested itself in the amiable disciple John, and met an instant and solemn rebuke from his divine master: "And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us." Again, when this same disciple and James saw that a Samaritan village would not receive their Master, "because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem," "they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, even as Elias did?" But he turned and rebuked them, and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." In the face of these solemn rebukes from the divine Jesus himself, no man can approve himself as "the minister of God," by a selfish, uncharitable, and exclusive spirit.

4. The minister of God must approve himself as such by a spirit of brotherly kindness. This is a trait of character much insisted on in the holy scriptures, and it should be very prominent in the ministry of the gospel; if they would exert a salutary influence in the church of God, and upon the world. The estimation in which the blessed Jesus holds this spirit, may be learned from his own words, in his last interview with his disciples, before he suffered, in which he says:

"These things I command you that ye love one another. Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." And the Apostle Paul writes: "Be kindly affectionate one to another, with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;" and again, "Let brotherly love continue." This spirit in ministers of the gospel will have a hallowed influence on themselves, on the church of God, and on the world. This spirit will neither envy a brother's good name, nor lightly take up an ill report of him; but it will defend his reputation as the property of the church. It will sympathize in a brother's trials and afflictions, and pour the healing balm into his wounded heart. It will admonish and reprove with tenderness and affection, not for self-gratification, but for his profit.

This spirit of brotherly kindness, in its character and manifestation, stands directly opposed to a spirit of ambition and self-aggrandizement. This unholy ambition Jesus rebuked, saying to his disciples, contending among themselves who should be greatest; "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant;" and again, "he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." This guilty ambition has made havoc in the church. It was this that raised "the man of sin," the "son of perdition," to great power, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God." And from age to age the same unholy spirit, under various pretexts, has wrought much evil in the church of Christ, and doth still work.

5. The minister of God must approve himself as such, by a spirit of meekness. Meekness has respect to the temper with which we receive and treat that which we conceive to be said or done by others, to our injury. It implies a forbearing, gentle, and forgiving disposition; free from a desire of retaliation and revenge. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit; for, says the Apostle Paul, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." To Timothy he writes, "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." And to Titus he writes, "Put them in mind, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness to all men." To the Corinthians he says, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat." This is the example of an apostle; but we have a pattern still higher, even Jesus Christ, "who suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." And he has pronounced his blessing on this character, saying, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Who would not be moved to admire and imitate the spirit of the blessed Jesus? who, when his enemies were reviling and crucifying him, prayed, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." The minister of God must expect

to be assailed with slanders, revilings, and many provocations, which will try him sorely. Nevertheless, he must obey the command of his Lord, who says, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." And let him be sustained and comforted by the words of Jesus Christ: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

The spirit of meekness is a necessary and important trait in the character of the private christian; it is not less essential in the minister of God, who should be "an example to the flock." In times of excitement and controversy, he should be especially watchful, and cultivate the spirit of meekness. And while he "earnestly contends for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints," and while he would "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free," he must do neither with "carnal weapons." The minister of God should not permit himself to use ridicule, or harsh, unkind and provoking epithets, or opprobrious names; but leave such weapons to those, who do not profess to be either the disciples or ambassadors of the "meek and lowly" Jesus. The use of such weapons is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel; mars the peace of him who wields them; injures the church; wounds the Saviour in the house of his friends; delights the enemies of the cross; and helps the prince of darkness in his destructive work. O that the time were come, when Zion's warfare should be wholly and unitedly against the kingdom of darkness, and waged with her own appropriate armor, which is "mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds."

6. The minister of God must approve himself as such, by a *zealous* spirit. The magnitude, the difficulty, and the important consequences of his ministry, demand that his whole soul should be engrossed with it, and at all times. An office is important according to the object to be accomplished, and the results of success or failure. The office of the ministry was instituted by the great Head of the church, for reconciling sinners to God; and thereby promoting their holiness, and securing their happiness. When the minister of God looks at the extent of his divine commission, involving the glory of God, the edification of the church, and the salvation of immortal beings now under condemnation, his soul is overwhelmed with the vastness of his trust and the greatness of his work. Again, he looks up to the countless host of happy spirits, redeemed from the earth through the instrumentality of the ministry; and then turns his eye downward, and beholds the unending agony and despair of those, who would not believe; and he feels an anxious concern and renewed zeal for those, who yet have a day of grace, and resolves to be "instant in season and out of season" for their salvation. No office is so full of anxiety, watching and labour, and of such eventful consequences, as the office of the minister of God; and therefore no other demands such untiring and burning zeal. No office is so unspeakably terrible to the unfaithful, as the sacred office to the unfaithful minister. He is set as a "watchman on the walls of Zion,"

and if he warn not men of the coming danger, and point not to the Lamb of God for refuge, and they perish, their blood will be required at his hand: the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The faithful minister "is unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one he is the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life." For his encouragement, God says, by the prophet Daniel, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they, that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

Now it is not every kind of zeal that is approved of God, or useful to the church. Nay, there has been much fiery zeal in all ages, which, like Saul's, has made havoc of the church, in unholy ambition for selfish or party ends. The zeal, which will approve the minister of God as such, is kindled by the Spirit of God, at his own holy altar. Its object is the glory of God, in the salvation of men; and its guide is not human wisdom or expediency, but the infallible word of God. This hallowed zeal will show, by its spirit and labors, that it is not from self, or for selfish ends; but *from* God and *for* God. Much "wood, hay, and stubble" are frequently built, by unholy zeal, with "the gold, silver and precious stones." The minister of God is imperfect and fallible; and he has a great work to do, involving infinite consequences of good or ill. Well then may he cry out and say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But he may add with encouraged heart, "Our sufficiency is of God."

7. The minister of God must approve himself as such, by a spirit of holy confidence in God, through Jesus Christ.

The confidence, of which we speak, is opposed to despondency. Despondency impairs resolution and effort, and if it amount to despair, it prevents both. To despair utterly of effecting any good, either in ourselves or others, without divine aid, is right and is a duty. But to despair of the Grace of God, in the right use of the appointed means, is to dishonor God and commit sin by unbelief.

Holy confidence in God is also opposed to presumption. Presumption expects the end, without using the appropriate means to accomplish it. This arises generally from incorrect views of the sovereignty of God, and of the manner in which he is pleased to deal with his rational creatures. The minister of God is his agent or instrument; and it is his duty, in all cases, to employ the means which God has ordained, and to look to God for his grace to make them more effectual. "Paul planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase," is the true doctrine on this subject. Therefore, in the economy of God, we have no more warrant to expect the end without the means, than to expect the end by the means, without the grace of God. It is a sinful abuse of the sovereignty of God, to charge our want of success upon that, when it may be chargeable to our own lukewarmness, indolence and unbelief, or to the neglect of the appointed means.

The minister of God must, therefore, as every other christian, be diligent in the use of the proper means, to cherish a holy spirit within him, and look with filial confidence to God, through Jesus Christ, for his

spirit to render the means effectual. And so likewise must he act, and so must he trust, in every duty incumbent on him as a christian; that he may set forth a lively example of the religion of the gospel.

But, in addition to this, the minister of God has many arduous duties to perform, and severe trials to endure, which are peculiar to his office and his work; he therefore needs grace to fit him for these. But whatever may be his difficulties or exigencies, while conscientiously discharging his duties, according to the word of God, he may repose an unshaken trust in God, for grace and strength according to his day. While he is unwearied in striving to improve his ministerial qualifications; and while, "instant in season and out of season," preaching the gospel in public, or from house to house, or in whatever work of the gospel he is engaged, he must look, with humble and firm faith, to God to give success. So that, while he diligently and faithfully uses the appointed means to accomplish the great objects of his ministry, he must rely, with a believing heart, on the blessing of God for their efficiency. God does sometimes withhold his blessing from the labors of his minister, either on account of his own sin or self-confidence, to humble him; or on account of the sin of the church (as he did with the Jews, when they brought not "the tithes into his storehouse"); and this he does, until the obstacle be removed by repentance and reformation.

As in his duties, so under his trials, the minister of God must approve himself as such, by confiding in him. Trials he must expect of various kinds, often hard to bear, and not unfrequently from unexpected sources; yet his trust in God should never fail or falter, when he is in the way of his duty, knowing, as the apostle John says, that "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;" and knowing, too, who has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;" "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Under his severest trials, the minister of God should bear in mind the sore trials and afflictions of the patriarchs and prophets; the grievous persecutions and sufferings of the apostles; and the cruel bonds and deaths of God's martyred ministers; and he should firmly and cheerfully endure the less, by that faith in God through Christ, by which they endured the greater, and of which they have left an example for his encouragement and imitation. And let him "look unto Jesus—and consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest he be wearied and faint in his mind."

In discoursing of the spirit which should characterize the ministers of God, I might descend into many more particulars. I might speak of an humble spirit, a faithful spirit, a patient spirit, and the like, as embraced in the general terms, "a holy spirit;" but all these are necessarily included in those upon which I have enlarged, and inseparable from them.

If I have sketched with truth, according to the scriptures, the spirit which becomes the sacred office, we cannot fail, my brethren, to perceive, that it is our duty to cherish and improve it. And the improvement should begin in the spirit of devotion to God. This should be humble, ardent, submissive, heavenly, and engrossing. It should per-

vade the whole soul, diffuse itself through all the feelings, and manifest itself in all the words and actions of the minister of God. Where this heavenly spirit of devotion to God is either wanting, or feeble and inconstant, we cannot expect a right spirit towards man. The spirit of devotion to God, is the spring and fountain of the spirit of benevolence, charity, brotherly kindness, and meekness towards man; so that the latter cannot exist without the former. In the contemplation of the compassion, forbearance, and loving kindness of God, we, by the Holy Ghost, partake, in a measure, of the same spirit towards our fellow men.

1. The minister of the gospel occupies a prominent station in the world. He is commissioned, as the ambassador of Christ, to the work of God; and he is to be a co-worker with him in the salvation of men. If, then, he would keep "a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men," he must exercise "a holy spirit," and never suffer a spirit of jealousy, envy, or ill-will, to have place in his breast; no, not for a moment. Such a spirit would, like a canker, eat out the spirit of devotion and brotherly kindness.

2. The glory of God demands, in his ministers, "a holy spirit," conformable to himself. They are his ambassadors, his representatives before the world; and they should, therefore, resemble him, in his kind and benevolent disposition. If the minister of God would glorify him, he must do the work of God in the spirit of God. A contrary spirit has lighted the fires of persecution, and has filled the dungeons of the inquisition, and other prison-houses, with victims. An unhallowed spirit, wherever it exists in those who "bear the vessels of the Lord," will derogate from the glory of God, and operate against the interests of Zion. And no gifts or zeal can supply the place of a holy, charitable and benevolent spirit in the ministry, or atone for its absence. "Herein" (says Jesus Christ) "is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." And again, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

3. The prosperity of the church demands a holy spirit in the ministry. The church will partake of the spirit of the ministry; whether it be the spirit of truth or the spirit of error; the spirit of holiness or the spirit of the world. And, therefore, as the ministry are appointed not only to preach the gospel and to "feed the flock of God;" but also to be "examples to the flock;" it is incumbent on them to feel and to exhibit that spirit, which will edify the church, in the holy faith of the gospel. Alienations, jealousies, and uncharitable oppositions in the ministry, do greatly hinder the piety, unity, energy and success of the church of Christ, and are solemnly reproved by the word of God. There is a divine eloquence in the holy spirit of the ministry, far more impressive than the most brilliant talents, and the most refined oratory of man, devoid of this spirit.

4. The salvation of the impenitent demands "a holy spirit" in the ministry. They look at those who profess to be the ministers of God, they carefully mark their conduct and scrutinize their spirit, and compare them with what the gospel requires them to be. If they see the

minister of God breathe the humble, holy spirit of the divine Master, and manifest it in his life and deportment, they deem him consistent and honest, and are, therefore, disposed the more to hearken to his warnings and exhortations. But when they see in him, who bears the sacred office, a selfish, envious, contentious, impatient, uncharitable or worldly spirit, they know that these and their like are contrary to the spirit of the gospel; and their hearts are shut against conviction, and hardened against reproof. The mere office, dignified as it is, will not give the ministry influence for good, without that spirit and deportment which become the sacred trust. If, then, the minister of God would be useful, he must, by the aid of divine grace, cultivate a holy spirit in all its aspects and relations, whether in the closet or the study; in the pulpit or from house to house; that thus he may make "full proof of his ministry."

5. A holy spirit in the ministry, in full and constant exercise in all its relations, is impressively demanded by the circumstances of our day. The world is in a state of great commotion, and the church has partaken largely of the excitement. Old foundations in society have been shaken or broken up; new theories are advanced, and novel experiments are tried. In the times upon which we have fallen, it has pleased God to rebuke his churches, by permitting divisions and controversies in most of them; and threatening the remainder with a yet more fearful result. The history of our own branch of the church may teach us a useful lesson. Less than a century and a half ago, a little vine was planted in this land; it grew, and its branches spread far and wide, and thousands and thousands reposed under its shade, and did eat of its goodly clusters. Peradventure, when we looked upon its beauty and strength, we forgot the hand that had planted and that had watered it with the dews of heaven; and God was displeased, and permitted that vine to be torn, its beauty marred, and its strength impaired. Our duty is, to receive the rebuke submissively; to confess our sin, and to be humble under the chastening of the Lord. By the division of our once united, influential, and happy church, we are thrown into controversy, in defence of those principles, which we conscientiously believe to be according to the scriptures of truth, and the standards of our church. While we may not be able to avoid controversy, consistently with our duty to God and his church, let its character be softened by "a holy spirit;" and let it be exclusively directed to its legitimate objects, the defence of truth, and the maintenance of gospel liberty and order. Unholy and angry disputations advance neither truth nor piety, but they excite and gratify unhallowed passions and wound the Savior in the house of his friends.

And now, beloved brethren in the ministry, let us ever look to the spirit of God, in the use of his appointed means, to inspire us, at all times, with that holy spirit of devotion to God, and good-will to men, by which alone we can "approve ourselves as the ministers of God." Let us always be found in this spirit, and in the faithful discharge of our duty, trusting in God through Jesus Christ for his help, his protection, and his blessing.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 9. Vol. XV[illegible]) SEPTEMBER, 1842. (Whole No. 189.

SERMON CCCXXXI.

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THE HAND OF GOD IN THE REFORMATION OF DRUNKARDS.

"This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."—Psalm cxviii., 23.

This is spoken of the establishment of Christianity upon Jesus Christ, the rock of ages—"The stone which the builders refused, is become the headstone of the corner." Nothing was more wonderful to patriarchs and prophets, nothing more confounding to all human speculation at the time of his advent, and nothing will so call forth the admiration of saints and angels in eternal ages, as that the babe of Bethlehem, the son of a carpenter, the man of sorrows, should lay the foundation of a kingdom which should swallow up all other kingdoms, and possess a dominion which should be without end. Yet so it was. "Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious." No hand of man was in that work. "This is the Lord's doing," said David, looking down through the vista of ages, "it is marvellous in our eyes."

Recognition of the hand of God in all his works of providence and grace is incumbent on every rational and accountable being. This duty I would present in relation to the recent wonderful operations of the cause of temperance in our own country.

It is now near twenty years since the first well-directed and united effort was made for the suppression of intemperance. Previous to that period, many were the struggles to burst the chain of the great destroyer. Yet little was accomplished, for the axe was not laid at the root of the tree. In the year 1826, the principle of entire abstinence from the sources of intemperance was brought before the nation as the only infallible antidote. A few saw its true character, and were satisfied that, as light should shine and men's consciences be reached and the blessing of God be secured, it would accomplish all that was desired. Would no man drink of the intoxicating cup, no man, it was manifest, would become a drunkard, and every drunkard would at once become a sober man. The principle was simple. It admitted of a demonstration to the feeblest intellect. Yet it met with the most powerful opponents—appetite, pride, fashion, interest, all the forms and habitudes

of society, and submitted its claims at a period of abounding luxury throughout the nation. How it struggled against them all and has been borne onward by an unseen hand through obloquy and reproach, until it is firmly seated in the breast of almost every considerate man as the only true principle, and what have been its triumphs in this land and other lands until ten millions of the human family have made it the basis of their practice, I shall not here detail;—wishing rather to confine my attention to a recent triumph over difficulties which seemed insurmountable, and to achievements of good which fill the mind with astonishment.

From undisputed computation it was manifest that we had in our country more than half a million drunkards—men given up to daily or to periodical habits of intemperance; a burden to the community and a sore affliction to their families—living truly without God and hope. The early efforts of the friends of temperance seemed to reach large numbers, and, for a season, to reclaim them; but soon that influence failed, and for several years but few habitual drunkards have been reported as reformed; although temperance societies have been flourishing, and thousands of the young, the moral, and the pious have been kept from destruction. The sad impression on the public mind was that drunkards must die off and go to their own place, and that our only hope was in raising up a new race of men on pure temperance principles. But what hath God wrought! About two years since, six intemperate men in the city of Baltimore resolved on personal reform. Their pledge, mutually given, attracted attention. They were joined by numbers who had given themselves to the delusive vice. As the community came to their association to see what this new thing was, each was induced to relate publicly his private history, the woes of intemperance in his own case, with his happiness in a deliverance from his own insatiable appetite and in standing up in his manliness, respected by all around him. In less than a year they numbered a thousand reformed men in their own city. They then extended their thoughts to other cities, and during the second year, they, with hundreds of others have gone like angels of mercy through the length and breadth of the land, literally proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound, and raising up from fifty to an hundred thousand reformed men from among the most debased and wretched outcasts of the human family. Distillers, from converting the grains and the fruits of heaven into the drink of the drunkard, have put out their fires; venders of intoxicating drinks, to an unlooked-for extent, have abandoned their business as the scourge of man; a mighty change has pervaded the drinking usages of the community, and great joy has been felt throughout the nation. And now to whom shall be given the glory of this truly extraordinary work? On this will much depend its continuance and its ultimate value both to its subjects, to the church, and the nation. THIS IS THE LORD'S DOING; IT IS MARVELLOUS IN OUR EYES.

The doctrine of a special providence in the affairs of men has never

perhaps been contested by any enlightened Christian, yet it is ordinarily confined to those accidents in life and those changes among the civil relations of nations which are of unexpected and extraordinary occurrence, while a divine influence upon the soul is limited to its spiritual resurrection. But why a great moral revolution in society should be considered as involving no divine agency that I cannot understand.

In reference to the work before us I remark, 1. That such agency was needed.

The almost universal language in relation to the reformation of drunkards was that which was used by the Saviour of the conversion of the rich, "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible." Whoever looked for a moment at the poor unfortunate man under the power of his horrid appetite, and saw him filthy, debased, lost to all self-respect, hardened against the cries of his suffering family, taking the bread from the mouth of his children and selling it for rum, pawning his own clothes, lying out drunk in the open field or raving like a maniac, indifferent alike to the goodness and the terrors of God and plunging reckless into an early grave and a fearful eternity, felt at once that no earthly arm could save him. He must die a drunkard and go to his own place. Those more especially had this feeling who in the providence of God had been connected with him, and had, year after year, made efforts to save him;—a fond, but heart-broken wife; a kind, affectionate parent;—children who had followed him with tears and struggles in his desperate course,—all, all said, nothing but the hand of God can break the terrible fetters. The half million drunkards in our country were therefore, as I have already remarked, given up as hopeless, unless God, in some extraordinary way, should interpose to save them. Medical skill had been exhausted; the gospel was sufficient to save, but they came not within its reach; the principle of total abstinence would effect a cure while the subject was compelled in jails and penitentiaries or on shipboard at sea, to its adoption, but would it effect a reform, and what earthly power would ever induce thousands on thousands through the length and breadth of the land voluntarily to adopt it? None, none. "With men," all said, "it is impossible, but not with God."

2. The work can with no consistency be ascribed to any but God.

When the blessed Saviour cast out devils, the Pharisees would not acknowledge it was the Lord's doing, but said, he cast out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils. And how did he meet the insinuation? Said he, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." There was philosophy in the answer. "If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself" and is destroying his own kingdom. How applicable to the present temperance movement, I need not say; for, surely, if there ever was a work of moral reform which is destroying the kingdom of Satan, breaking down his strongholds, and producing a revolt among his subjects on whom he counted with the greatest security, it is that in which we are now rejoicing. What man in his

senses will affirm that Beelzebub ever instigated a drunkard to reform? We must either reject all superhuman aid, and that we cannot do, (the work is beyond any human arm), or give God the glory.

3. It comports with other divine operations:—with the deliverance of the children of Israel, groaning under the Egyptian task-masters—with the restoration of the wandering captives in Babylon—with the cure of the leper—with the opening of the blind eye, unstopping the deaf ear, and casting out devils by the hand of the compassionate Saviour; yea, raising the dead to life—also, with other events of a modern date, in which we think we distinctly see the hand of God. It was God, we say, and who will affirm we do not say rightly, that put it into the heart of Luther to commence the reformation in the sixteenth century; of Clarkson and Wilberforce to break the chains of slavery; of Robert Raikes to commence the Sunday school system, and of a few devoted men here and in Great Britain, to commence the work of foreign missions, the circulation of bibles and tracts and the education of pious young men for the ministry. The Christian cannot give the glory of these things to another. And it is the same with the work we contemplate. As much as any or all, it bears the impress of Almighty power and divine compassion.

4. The fundamental principle of this reform is from God.

Vain man would be wise; and his self-conceit is much in proportion as he lives in neglect of the Bible. Many take to themselves the glory of principles which have long stood prominent in this sacred volume. For every moral evil in our world, here is a remedy. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." "Enter not into the path of the wicked, avoid it: pass not by it, turn from it and pass away." When God saw wine ruining the offering of Nadab and Abihu, he for ever forbade the priests using wine or strong drink on going into the tabernacle of the congregation. When he saw that wine and strong drink would interfere with the sanctity of the Nazarite, he prohibited him their use at all times and on all occasions. When he saw how these intoxicating drinks ruined kings and made princes pervert judgment, he said it was not right for such to use them. And when he perceived how wine mocked and deceived men, he publicly stamped it as a "mocker." And as he looked down from heaven and witnessed all the woe, and sorrow, and contentions, and babbling, and wounds without cause, and redness of eyes, ruin of bodies and ruin of souls it occasioned, he told men not even to look upon it when it sparkled in its cup, for at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder. In these and other instances he revealed and established the great principle of total abstinence from all that intoxicates, which has wrought such wonders in our land—the principle of self-denial, subjection of the animal appetites to reason, self-distrust, and concern for the future—as the only principle which will either prevent or suppress intemperance. He is the author, and to him should be the glory of all the good the principle has accomplished.

5. The work is the result of other divine providences. Some things seem disconnected with other occurrences, and of these, men are prone to say they are by chance; but not so this wonderful reformation. The nation sat in darkness. All saw its drunkenness was terrible, but few knew, as they might and ought to have known, its causes, extent or remedy. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." For fifteen years an amount of information, almost without measure, had been circulated by the press and enforced by the living speaker upon the useless and destructive nature of intoxicating drinks and the doom of the drunkard. Sermons had been preached, lectures given, prayers and supplications offered. Eight thousand temperance societies had been formed in the nation, and two millions of our population had ceased to use intoxicating drinks; the cause of temperance had taken deep hold of the public mind, and multitudes were anxious for the salvation of the unfortunate drunkard. This was God's preparatory work; all needed for this majestic result. The reformation of the drunkards of the nation could not have been accomplished without it; and, if accomplished, public sentiment would not have sustained it. Nor was the work we contemplate commenced without the intervention of God's own truth. Four of the six inebriates who began it, were, on the evening of its commencement, led by an unseen hand, to the house of God to hear one who, in God's name, was to expose the evils of intemperance and plead with the poor drunkard hastening to ruin. The jeers of the bar-room now lost their power. "I believe," said one, on his return, "that temperance is a good thing;" and, on that night, in the bar-room of the tavern, they commenced the work which has sent reform and joy to the extremities of the nation. Who will say it is not the Lord's doing?

6. Conscience gives God the glory of this work. A few have been so fool-hardy as to boast of their manly efforts and successful struggles to accomplish what no moral argument, nor domestic claims, nor divine influence could ever effect; but they have been few. The spontaneous feeling of the mass of the reformed has been that it is the Lord's doing. "It was God who saved me; he broke the chains that bound body and soul; he enabled me to stand up in my manliness and again be free; he has raised me out of a deep pit of wretchedness; he has plucked me as a brand from the burning; my poor heart is full; I am almost blind with the tear in my eye; I brush it away to say, 'Glory to God in the highest,'" has been the language not of one merely, nor of ten, but it is believed of ten thousand of the reclaimed; and will continue to be so if they are suffered to speak even in the tones of nature. And how could it be otherwise? A man may as well deny God in his original creation as in his redemption from the habit of drunkenness.

7. It is a work for a far higher end than is visible to the eye of man; and therefore we say most emphatically, it has in it the hand of God. The cold-hearted philosopher may contemplate it as illustrative of the dignity of human nature, which can rise from the lowest degradation and stand forth again in the nobleness of a man. The philanthro-

pist may rejoice in it as a relief from the greatest ills which flesh is heir to. And the patriot may exclaim, O blessed work! rendering jails and poor-houses hereafter tenantless. All such may look not a step beyond outward good, or man's earthly existence. But they catch but a glimpse of the great work which has here been accomplished. What is man? What is the world in which we are living? What is the object of all the mercies which are bestowed upon us? Why are we called back from the paths of sin and woe? Why has the Saviour died, and the Bible been given, and the Sabbath instituted, and the Spirit sent to convince of sin, and the ministry to admonish and rebuke with tears, and why is a voice following us all our days, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it?" Why, but to save the soul? Man is lost. No drunkard hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God. Yet the drunkard may be saved. How? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Thus were saved some among the Corinthians. "Such," said Paul, "were some of you. But ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." But how is the drunkard saved by the Spirit? How, but through the truth? Like other men, he is to be convinced of sin, made to feel his obligations to God,—to cut off the right hand—pluck out the right eye, and devote himself in newness of life to the divine service. But in all his habits, there is an obstacle to the truth perfectly insurmountable. Moral sensibilities are blunted, conscience is seared, faculties are stupified, affections laid waste—profanity, sensuality, Sabbath-breaking, hatred of God and the Bible and ministers, these constitute his moral characteristics. The half million drunkards in our land were, a year ago, sealed up in impenetrable darkness. Men said "Preach the Gospel;" prophesy over the valley of bones and pray for the Spirit: who can tell but they may live? But prophecy was vain. Why? Because the wretched beings were thrown beyond the reach of all arguments and motives, and God said, "Go through the gates, prepare ye the way of the people. Cast up, cast up the high way, gather out the stones." Man must be made sober before he will hear the Gospel. The drunkard must be reformed, brought and placed at the feet of Jesus, "clothed and in his right mind." And God has been doing this through the length and breadth of the land. "Behold," he may truly say, "ye despisers, and wonder and perish, for I work a work in your day, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you,"—a work of moral reform, accomplished by my word—accomplished by the instrumentality of men raised by me from the lowest depths of degradation—accomplished by a spirit of kindness and compassion toward the miserable—a work which removes the greatest obstruction to the reception of the Gospel and the salvation of the soul—a work which may be followed by the eternal blessedness of a multitude once utterly beyond hope.

Yes, this mighty reformation of drunkards in our land is not merely for the good of the body—it has broken the strongest chains of sin and Satan; it has waked up the immortal mind in thousands on thou-

sands to its true interests, and is one of those extraordinary movements which God has predicted as bringing this revolted world to the enjoyment of his love. "In the last days, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, and I will show them wonders in Heaven above and signs in the earth beneath." Many, even in the reform, may make a mock of sin, deny the hand that has saved them, and say, Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? But many, we trust, will be led to repentance. The goodness of God has already melted many hearts, and as they find their appetite subdued and themselves restored to the bosom of their families, and respectable in society; more, we believe, will lift up their voice of thanksgiving to Heaven, and pledge themselves eternally to be the Lord's. Says the last report of the Boston Washington Society, and it is pleasant to see such an acknowledgment in a report, it deserves the attention of those who say the triumph of temperance is the triumph of infidelity—"Many of our members (reformed men,) have become members of Christian churches in this city, and still maintain their characters pure and unsullied." Here is the end of this work, showing the hand of God,—no, not its end; that will come only when such, "washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus," shall stand upon the heavenly mount, cast their crowns at his feet, and sing, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins, in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

8. It is a work for the good of the Church, and necessary for the coming of millenium. Proof is not needed. How can the Church live and flourish in a land of Sabbath-breaking, profaneness and drunkenness? How can she keep her own members from perdition? Where is her security for her baptised offspring? Whence can she gain new trophies for her Redeemer, and what is her hope of a speedy coming of millenial glory? Twenty years ago the Church herself was scathed by intemperance. Ministers were ruined, communicants were disgraced and cast out as a miserable branch, convictions were quenched; revivals blasted; sanctuaries demolished, and beautiful fields of Zion laid waste. From authentic documents it at one time appeared that from 135 churches, more than 160 members had been excommunicated for intemperance, and more than 200 others for immoralities to which wine and strong drink had led them. And the Church was made poor. Ten times more did she waste upon wine and strong drink than she gave for the spread of the Gospel. And shamefully powerless. "Why go you not," said one to his neighbour, "to the prayer meeting?" "Because," was the reply, "I wish not to hear one pray whose breath smells of brandy." The elder and the deacon selling and the communicant drinking rum in the tavern, were the jeer of the ungodly. Nor here only was felt the curse, but around the globe. Everywhere the Church was tarnished and withered by her own drinking habits, and seemed ready to die in a world of drunkenness and pollution. But God has had mercy, and rescued her by the temperance reform. Her ministers have been saved. Her communicants have been saved. Her holy ordinance

has been purged from the basest mixtures. The traffic in intoxicating drinks, that deadly gangrene upon her vitals, has been cut off. Yet not wholly. Some still manufacture and sell, for gain, the destructive poison. Some ministers and Christians still drink wine in "becoming moderation," pleading their Bible right and the example of the Saviour, and there was need of a rebuke which should make them ashamed of their practice. It has been given from a most unexpected quarter, from the poor out-cast in the gutter, "the base things of the world and things which are despised," brought up in the providence of God to teach the Church what she should long since have learned from the Bible, that "wine is a mocker and strong drink is raging," and to beseech the Church for his sake and for the sake of 500,000 other lost beings, some, perhaps stumbling and falling over her, to abandon a practice which kills both body and soul in hell. The instrumentality may be despised and the instruction rejected, but "whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

This work of reform is for the encouragement of the Church as well as her purification; and here, too, we see in it the hand of God. How has she sat disconsolate as she has seen intemperance roll over the land, invading the sanctuary and the pulpit, and men go down by thousands to the drunkard's grave, and no arm interposing for their rescue! How has she trembled at the thought that the evil might spread wider and wider, and mock all her prayers and efforts to save souls from death! But she need no longer be disconsolate; no longer tremble. Behold! the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save. Light shineth in darkness. He has sent, and he can send again a spirit of reform where no Christian can easily get foothold—amid the most debased in sin and enslaved of Satan; and the Church must feel, in view of this wonderful work, and acknowledge it too, if her pride does not forbid it because it has been done so much without her direct agency, that all bonds may be broken and all cords loosed, and the whole world soon be converted to God. Not a reformed drunkard is there now in the United States, for whose salvation there is not an encouragement to labour, entirely new and decidedly great. Of the whole mass, from Eastport to the Upper Missouri, enough with their families to constitute a thousand churches, it may be said the unclean spirit is cast out, and they are wandering about seeking rest, and only need to be directed to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Already revivals have sprung up in the track of the reform. Souls have been converted; waste places have been built up. The wilderness and the solitary place have been glad for it. Instead of the thorn has come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar has come up the myrtle tree; and the mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and the Lord is glorious.

The Church looks for the millenium. One song is to employ all nations, and all are to cry, "Worthy is the Lamb!" Holiness to the Lord is to be written upon all employments and labors. "Behold the

tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." How is it to come? Some say by miracle—great displays of Almighty power. But miracles convert not the heart. The kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom—within; built on repentance for sin, carried up on faith in the atoning Lamb of God, and perfected through the Spirit in self-dedication of all that we are and all that we possess to his service and glory; and it is to be established in our world, as it has been in every believer from the first conversion on Pentecost day to the present time. Every obstruction is to be removed from the river to the ends of the earth. Intemperance, the greatest of all, is to be removed. Every drunkard is to be reformed, and all poisonous fountains are to be dried up. How? asks every angel in heaven and every saint on earth. Precisely by such a movement as we now witness, a movement among the wretched slaves of the cup; a simultaneous bursting of the chains which bind them; a public proclamation of all the evils of intemperance in their own case, and a universal war against every drink which destroys the body and kills the soul. This will do it; and because this will do it, we say the hand of God is in it. They in their heart may have no reference to this great end. But God uses them as instruments of his own purposes. He is employing every temperance meeting to break the chains of Satan and bring this world to the enjoyment of his love; and when intemperance is out of the way, and men no longer make or sell or use the drunkard's drink, then the Church will be purer, holier, have more wealth, and far more of vital efficacy, and the world will be peaceful, and gentle, and teachable, and tractable; light and truth will be received; the Spirit of God will move with comparatively little resistance, upon the face of the deep; the Mohammedan, the Chinese, the poor pagan, no longer despising the Christian as a drunkard maker, may listen to the story of a crucified Christ, and the world speedily rejoice in the great salvation.

Having illustrated and, as I trust, established the position that the extraordinary reformation which are now witnessing in this land is the Lord's doing—the work of his approval, the work of his providence, the work of his all-controlling Spirit, I remark,

1. That it should be so recognized.

There is much speculative but more practical atheism in the world. God has not half the glory which belongs to him in the works of his hands, even from his own people. We are either afraid of acknowledging a work to be God's work, because we shall have to give it our full approbation, or because we wish to take the glory of it to ourselves. Sometimes an appearance of jealousy for the honor of God covers a refusal to give him the praise. "We will not ascribe to him a work so full of imperfection, with such mixtures of error and weakness and folly." And on this principle we might refuse him all the honor of every revival of religion, and of all his institutions in our world;—all, mingled with human imperfection. The spirit of true

piety looks at the great and fundamental principles of God's moral government and at the whole scheme of mediatorial mercy by Jesus Christ, and for whatever sustains and accomplishes their objects it gives him praise. This work is his, in the hands of frail, erring man; often, perhaps, of men who despise their Maker and seek only their own glory; but its principles are the principles of eternal truth taught in God's word and providence, and its tendencies and end are the destruction of Satan and the salvation of the soul; and it should be acknowledged as his in every pulpit, in every temperance meeting, and especially by every man reclaimed from those awful courses, whose end is death. And yet how many pulpits are there in our land in which it is never acknowledged! How many churches which are shut against it! How many ministers who ridicule and despise it! I blush to think. And how many temperance meetings in which God is never honored! The praises of cold water are sung, but not the praises of Him who made the water. The speaker who induces the poor drunkard to sign the pledge, is honored with bursts of applause, but no thanks are offered to Him who gave the speaker his power, and inclined the heart of the wretched being to flee to the altar and secure reformation. I am aware of the fears expressed of mingling temperance with religion. Would there were as many of mingling temperance with atheism. An acknowledgment of God, we are sometimes told, would be so repulsive to the poor drunkard we should never gain him. "First make him sober, and then turn him over to the divine to teach him; but be sure you have no religion, no, not even morality in temperance meetings, else you repel every lover of the bottle!" Does experience know any such result? "We are not," says Dr. Waterbury of Hudson, where the work of reform was like the whirlwind, "a remarkably religious people, and yet the general sentiment has been—'the finger of God has been in this thing.'" Said one of the reformed drunkards, "Do you wish, my friends, to know why the reform in Hudson has taken so deep a hold and resulted so gloriously? I will tell you. The hand of God has been acknowledged, and his aid implored from the very beginning. Let us not ascribe the glory to human agents, let us give it to him to whom of right it belongs." And says the president of the Boston Washington Society, "While our meetings have continued to be opened with prayer we seem to be secure of the Divine blessing." We repel the charge that we bring the cause of temperance to support peculiar views of religion. On the contrary, we acknowledge the hand of God and implore his blessing for the advancement of the cause of temperance. And will this drive the poor unfortunate drunkard from us? Believe it who can. It will cause him to feel that there is an Almighty arm which can break the power of his appetite and snatch him from the burning; a compassionate Saviour, who will carry him through all his struggles and give him the victory. Let the hand of God then be acknowledged in the temperance meeting, and, above all, by every reclaimed drunkard as the hand that has snatched him from the burning.

Let him lift up his heart against God and say, "Mine own arm hath gotten me the victory," and who can answer for him? But he cannot, will not do it. In the very instinct of nature he will say, "God is my deliverer."

2. The reform, thus wonderful, should not merely be recognized as the cause of God, but be loved and sustained by every Christian.

And in saying this, I say nothing but what every philanthropist and every patriot will fully accede to. The hearts of thousands, who make no profession of Christian charity, are filled with joy at the results it occasions. But there are peculiar reasons why the Christian should love and rejoice in this work. Rich harvests, abundant trade, general health, increase of wealth, cessation from war, would give joy to the philanthropist and patriot; but here is a moral revolution, a bursting of the strongest chains of Satan—not a decidedly religious work, but God's work to bring men under the influence of his grace. Go into yonder family and see that reformed husband and father. He has forsaken the tavern and the dram-shop. He has laid aside his fury and terror. He is clothed, and in his right mind. He reads the Bible. He goes to the house of God. His little ones are taken into the Sabbath school. He listens to the sound of the Gospel, and weeps over years of drunkenness, sin and shame. It is no imaginary picture—and is there nothing in all this to the Christian? Look over the land and see the abstractions of living men from the ten thousand haunts of vice, and the warfare the once devoted slaves of intemperance are waging against the most delusive forms of sin and death, and say, is this nothing to the Christian? Look at the peace, the order, the comfort of almost unnumbered families a year ago under the influence of drunken husbands and drunken fathers, and see them waking up to personal responsibility and serious reflection, and looking to the house of God as the place of their rest after being tossed for years on the drunken sea, and say if this is nothing to the Christian. Hallelujah! must be the shout of every benevolent heart. Yes, the cause should be loved, and the cause should be sustained. Do you ask how?

1st, By prayer. If it is God's work, God is to be sought for it. God is to be praised for it. God is to be confided in as one who can carry it forward to its perfect triumph. Would the Church now wrestle with the angel of the covenant with holy energy, who can tell but the monster evil, which has almost crushed the Church and kept unnumbered souls from the kingdom of God, might now be extirpated! There is a time to pray for special objects. It is when God is working in behalf of those objects. That time misimproved and lost, all is lost. And if the nation is not now redeemed from intemperance, may it not be because the people of God do not pray as they ought for deliverance? Wo to the Church, if she comes not to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

2. By self-denial and correct example. The Christian may say he has a Bible right to drink wine. He has the same right to let it alone, and the voice of humanity and of Providence call upon him to let it

alone. If he does not, he sustains the traffic. He upholds intemperance. He is a stumbling block over which the reformed man may stumble and perish. He aids in entailing upon the community, two-thirds of its crime and woe, and upon the Church far more of stupidity and strife than would exist were intemperance done away, and he throws his influence against the mightiest effort for good which has blessed our age. "It is good," said an apostle, "neither to eat flesh nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended, or made weak." If there is anything plain in morals or demanded for the good of the Church and the world, it is Christian obligation on the point before us.

3. By such a public manifestation of principle on the subject as shall show fully to the world the mind of the Christian. From the beginning, every solemn and important transaction has been sealed to show the intention and sincerity of the parties transacting. God set his bow in the cloud as a seal of his covenant that he would no more destroy the world by a deluge. Circumcision was instituted as a seal of the righteousness of faith. Every Christian subscribes with his own hand to the Lord. And no man transacts business with his neighbour without a pledge for the fulfilment of his purpose. The Temperance Pledge violates no law, infringes on no duties, sacrifices no man's health or wealth, it designates and confirms our purpose, and has been, to an untold extent, under God, the instrument of preventing drunkenness and rescuing the inebriate. By this the Christian should sustain the cause of Temperance and sustain the reformed man in his struggles. One minister of the Gospel thinks it would be sin in him to sign the Pledge; another, that he is pledged to every good work in his Christian profession; a third will preach an eloquent sermon to reformed drunkards, but will not sign the Pledge, because on special occasions he may want to take a little; a fourth refuses to sign because he may be committed to some abstract principle on which his mind is not fully settled; a fifth must drink wine at weddings, as if this, how intoxicating and ruinous soever be its properties, belongs to this sacred and joyful ordinance. Thus such virtually stand aloof from this great enterprise, and gain neither the confidence of the reformed nor of the temperance community, and happy will they be if their sons are not "pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides." The spirit of the age demands that men prominent in the Church stand prominent in moral enterprises. There may be no hesitating, no vacillating in these latter-day wars with Satan; and if the Pledge is the badge of temperance, it should be publicly and fearlessly worn by every Christian.

4. By encouraging and upholding the reformed, and searching out with Christian kindness all the intemperate, and leading them to the healing fountains.

The reformed have been accused of a spirit of unbecoming confidence, boasting and presumption. How justly, in some cases, I do not say. They would be more than men if some were not unduly elated by the applauses bestowed upon their addresses and the success

of their labours. But so far as I have been able to judge from considerable intercourse the mass are diffident, fearful, and need greatly the hand of Christian friendship. They are poor, have not the means of support, and need charity. Without employment, they may soon be discouraged, and, in disconsolate moments, may fall into the snare of the tempter. I plead for them with the Christian community—I plead for their families just rising, through this wonderful work, into life and happiness.

I would pay a tribute of gratitude and praise to the Martha Washington Societies which have dispensed to them the most noble and seasonable charities, confident they will receive the smiles of him who said, "When I was an hungered ye fed me; naked, ye clothed me; sick and in prison, ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me." The whole Christian community should be alive to the interests of these men, that they go not back and perish but go forward and complete their great reform by placing their feet on the rock of ages, and thus co-operate with and honor God. And every poor unfortunate drunkard yet under the awful alcoholic delusion should be searched out and encouraged to reform. Now is the time; the harvest season. Another year, to-morrow, may be too late. They are anxious for reform. Their appetite grinds them in the dust. They know not how to break their chains. The poor drunkard asks for help.

"Speak not to him a bitter word."
"Go kindly to him—make him feel—
Your heart yearns deeply for his weal;
Tell him the dangers thick that lay
Around his 'widely devious way;'
So shalt thou win him, call him back
From pleasure's smooth seductive track;
And warnings thou hast mildly given,
Shall guide the sinner up to heaven."

Oh! if every Christian and every church, would now take the stand, and now is the day of hope, to which God in his providence calls them, if they would abjure everything themselves that intoxicates, take the reformed by the hand, and with Christ-like compassion go out after every poor unfortunate drunkard, if they would rebuke, warn, and admonish every individual entering these delusive courses, and with outstretched hands and weeping eyes call down the grace of heaven, if, with a liberality like his who, though rich, for our sakes became poor, they would open their hand and spread abroad light and truth, facts and arguments, they might soon see the happy time when earth would no longer be cursed with a drunken parent or a drunken offspring; when every mountain would be removed, and every valley filled; and the earth be radiant with the divine glory.

A word to the reformed inebriate and I have done.

My friend, you have passed through a change in the wonderful providence of God astonishing and grateful to all around you, and filling your own heart with the most affecting emotions. It is not my design

to remind you of the past. I know you are most ready, as you look up to your Maker, to say, "I was as a beast before thee." I know that you feel that it is a wonder of mercy that you have been kept alive amid all your wretched courses, and still more that you are now a sober man, no longer lashed as with a scorpion's sting and agonized by a burning appetite, but are sitting, peaceful and happy, in the bosom of your family, and rejoicing once more in a feeling of self-respect and in the respect of all around you. Let me lead you up to the hand that has preserved you amid all your dangerous ways, and now reclaimed and saved you. God has done it. He directed your hand to sign that pledge. He gave you courage and fortitude to withstand all your temptations. He has been about your path and about your bed, and guided you in your returning ways. O give him the glory. Give him your heart. Give him the remnant of your days. As you have dared to be sober, now dare to be religious. As you have taken one great step, cut off the right hand, plucked out the right eye, trampled under foot the cup your greatest foe, now rise to the dignity of an immortal being and consecrate your all to the service of God. O let his hand lead you and guide you in green pastures and beside the still waters. Give him your entire confidence and love, and then, as there has been joy on earth at your outward reformation, so there will be joy among the angels of God at your conversion, and God himself will rejoice over you and say, "This my son which was dead is alive, which was lost is found."

SERMON CCCXXXII.

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THE GUIDANCE NEEDED BY YOUTH.

"Wilt thou not from this time cry, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"—JEREMIAH iii., 4.

THE people addressed by the Lord through the prophet on this occasion, had been as the rebellious son, or faithless wife. They had departed from God. But being called upon to return, with intimations of mingled mercy and rebukes, it was inquired whether they would not

from that time forward cry, "My father, thou art the guide of my youth." From the time they were warned, corrected, and invited to repentance, would they not come and seek mercy from that God who had always been their father and their guide? Would they not beseech him to take them under his paternal direction? Would they not do it forthwith? This has been commonly understood as the sense of the passage, although it has sometimes been viewed as a reproof of the hypocrisy and presumption of the Jews. As if it said, "notwithstanding your abandoned and obstinate wickedness, you will still pretend to call God your Father and the Guide of your youth, the Friend who had taken care of you from your infancy." But whichever construction is adopted, the passage undoubtedly shows the desirableness of the divine guidance, and that from the beginning of our existence. Whether it is applied to a nation or an individual, it is alike true and significant. It is spoken nationally here, but may be employed with equal propriety in reference to individuals. I would, therefore, consider it as exhibiting the importance or necessity of the proper guidance of the young and inexperienced.

From the circumstances and condition of this class of the community, they evidently require a peculiar supervision by others. They need especially the divine guidance, and such instrumental direction as God has appointed for them. Man, as he comes forward and grows up in the world, developes continually the two constituent portions of his nature, viz., his body and his soul—the latter being subdivided into the intellectual and moral. Care must be taken of both and of each. No one can be fully happy or answer all the purposes of his being, without the proper training of both constituents of his nature. Many have little regard for the body, because they conceive the soul to be so important: but how can the soul or mind well execute its functions, unless the body with which it is so intimately connected be moulded and trained aright?

1. I therefore observe—that the guidance which childhood and youth need, is a *physical* guidance or training. A remark or two in illustration is all that may be made here. A proper unfolding of the powers of the body and its general health involve most essentially the well-being of the man, and have rarely received the attention which is due to them. How to rear a healthy and vigorous frame is a question of serious moment—how to regulate the habits so as to make the body, that medium and instrument of the mind, the most perfect and efficient, deserves truly the consideration of every parent and guardian of the young. The subjects of food, labor, rest, exercise, recreation, cleanliness, should be thoroughly scrutinized, according to our means and opportunities. Nothing is unimportant which teaches the method of securing freedom from disease, and of applying the strength and elasticity of the frame to its appropriate purposes. How is life to be enjoyed, or good to be achieved, or even the solaces of religion to be habitually and fully possessed, with a nervously shattered and debilitated bodily constitution? Should the physical nature which God has given us, equally with the intellectual and moral, be deemed worthy of no care? Should no proper concern be felt for its highest well-being

and perfection? And should not the neglect of it be considered as a sin against God as well as ourselves? And yet not a few seem to be wholly unaware, that it is connected with any important purposes in the divine economy. To be saved from immediate suffering and death is indeed much thought of, and commonly provided for, by fitting instrumentalities. But, otherwise, the physical frame may be effectually murdered by wanton carelessness and exposure; by intemperance; by excess of every kind; by alternate indolence and over-action—the foundation being laid by these means, in early childhood, for a life of debility, uselessness, and suffering. Let, then, attention be paid to the physical training of children, as a sort of fountain-head of good and desirable results.

2. The guidance which is needed for childhood and youth, is also an *intellectual* guidance. This often-repeated truth is not yet felt in its real importance. The advances of mankind towards a just appreciation of it have been slow. Its wide and diversified relations are but faintly conceived in most minds. The human subject evidently holds a high rank in the scale of being. His intellectual, including his moral nature, is his great distinction. As possessing a mind or soul, he has an intimate relation to higher orders of existences—to those that are all intellect—to angels and to God. The intelligence with which he is natively endowed should be cultivated. Uncultivated, undeveloped, it is inconsiderable. The human subject neglected only shows that he has a *capacity* for intellectual acquisitions—that he differs from animals by the reason which he exercises, and for which their instinct is a substitute; as to anything further, he might almost as well be a brute. But train him, give him an opportunity to unfold and improve his faculties, and he shows at once his vast superiority to all the creatures amid which he is placed. According to the degree of his cultivation is he intellectual. Scarcely any boundaries can be assigned to his progress in knowledge even here below. Who can easily weigh the vast sense of Plato, or master the keen logic of Aristotle, or grasp the scientific research of Newton, or fathom the all-comprehending philosophy of Bacon! Cultivate the human intellect, and in the chemist's laboratory it can analyze or compound the various substances of earth, it can resolve them into their original elements, or re-construct them into their appropriate forms. Cultivate the mind, and, by an unerring geometry, it can measure the earth and even the heavens; with the mariner's compass, it can sail a ship to any part of the globe, and at any hour tell the place which she occupies, on the immense expanse of waters. Cultivate the mind, and, availing itself of steam, it can effect land or water travelling with the speed of the wind; inventing types, it can receive and communicate thoughts to an indefinable extent; and by reason of memory, it can possess itself of the knowledge of all antiquity. These are some of the things which the intellect of man can do. Is it not worth cultivating to some degree at least? Are not its dignity, happiness, and usefulness consulted, by preparing it for the purposes which are to be answered in this probationary life? Now, every child, be it remembered, has this mind in embryo. Shall it not receive a

proper training? Is it not deserving of it for the high advances which it *can* make in knowledge, and *will* make in many instances? When that little boy may become an honor to his species, like the English Davy, or our own Bowditch, shall he be neglected or unpatronized? When he may become at least a useful and happy man, shall we not endeavor to make him so? Is it not necessary to give a direction to the unfolding mind of youth? Not only does he deserve it for the inherent greatness that is in him, made as he is only a little lower than the angels—but there is a necessity in the case, if we would save it from perversity and ruin. It *will* be trained, in some form, by all the influences which it meets with, by every object which is beheld, by every word which is listened to, by every human example which is presented. Shall it be suffered, then, to be misdirected, or enfeebled, or fatally warped, so that it can never answer the purposes for which it was called into existence? Let those answer who have, in any degree, the care of providing for and educating the young. Let our Sabbath schools, and our common schools, and other institutions of education, whether it be of intellectual or moral education, or both, be shaped and regulated so as to secure most effectually the object. Attention, effort, and vigilance should be called up to this mighty human interest in an increased degree. On the intellectual training of the young of this generation immense interests depend; and especially on their moral and religious training, as will soon also be seen. I will quote here, on this subject, a remark or two of a foreign journalist, who speaks in a tone of no common earnestness, respecting the necessity of meeting the terrible evils which threaten England, in the great mass of minds and souls neglected there.

"It is obvious," he says, "that men must be qualified, by knowledge and mental cultivation, before they can be safely entrusted with the task of giving laws to society; and hence the favorite topic with the genuine friends of the people has been of late, the necessity of education. And truly great this necessity is: the statistics of ignorance are appalling. Let schools, therefore, be extended with all zeal, and to the utmost possible amount. It is a righteous work, and in the right direction. Education, however, has been discussed on too narrow a basis. Education has been talked of, as if it were something confined to the narrow walls of a school, and could be given to children by the time they reach some twelve or fourteen years of age. How utterly inadequate would such a training be as an apprenticeship to the practice of any art? how infinitely less can it suffice for effecting one of the most arduous tasks in the world, the right development of the human soul? For what is education? It is the harmonious cultivation of all man's faculties, the proportionate and just development of all the elements of his moral and intellectual being; a formation of character, a calling forth of feeling, a creating of habits, resulting in a certain moral tone, moral harmony, and moral character. Is this a business that belongs [wholly] to childhood? Is it not rather the process of a life?" We should all probably assent to the correctness of these observations, even

if they had been designed for us in this land—especially to his definition of education, and the term of its continuance. It is, indeed, for life, commencing in the child at the earliest period of mental activity. And it is, it must be, ever-continuing in this world at least. How important, then, that there should be a competent guidance!

3. Youth needs, also, and above all, a *moral and religious* training. This necessity is based on the fact that man is a moral and accountable being—thus he was made to be religious and to serve and glorify his Maker, and especially that he has fallen from his primitive uprightness. To come short of right, moral, and religious dispositions would be to fail of the very end of his creation, and to sink for ever in his native depravity. His moral nature and feelings—his moral and religious sensibilities, are a part of himself, and indeed, the most essential part. These connect him more directly with God and with eternity, than the other constituents of his nature do. By reason of these susceptibilities he is made a subject of rewards and punishments—he becomes a candidate for eternal happiness or misery. They render him capable of moral government, and of possessing a moral character—a character of holiness or sin before God and the universe. As endowed with attributes of this kind, he is capable of becoming a subject of divine grace and mercy inasmuch as he is fallen—as bearing the beautiful seal of holiness upon his heart—and of cultivating those feelings which constitute the happiness both of time and eternity. Or he is capable, and highly so, of the opposite state of sinfulness and vileness before God and man—of remaining for ever in his sinful defilements and the ruin of his soul. As a moral agent, therefore, it is infinitely important what course he shall pursue as to morality and piety—what moral and religious features shall be impressed upon him. If he is to secure the legitimate ends of his being, he must have a right guidance in his moral and spiritual concerns. As he sets out in his course, he must be put right. That is to say, from early childhood he must be trained in the right ways of the Lord. That culture and discipline must be bestowed upon him which, with God's blessing and Spirit, will issue in moral harmony, and a holy tone of character, which will prepare him to lead a useful life, to die a peaceful death, and to enter at last upon the joys of the blessed. In regard to the young, the chief, the paramount, object should be a moral and religious guidance. Giving due attention to the other particulars already named, their physical and intellectual education, this should be a special object of regard. With all wise persons it will be felt to be so. There seems now to be no available remedy for the evils of society, as there certainly is none for the disease of the soul, except evangelical religion. This, early inculcated and fully exhibited, can alone rescue man and society from destruction. There begins to be a feeling extensively prevalent that the preservation of everything valuable must be sought for in early religious training, continued through life. It is felt by statesmen and others in secular life, as well as by philanthropists and Christians, that the business of education must become directly religious, or connected with what has been called *Church*—that is to say, the instruction of religion embodied

in Christian organization. There is no moral power aside from that, sufficiently great to curb the licentiousness and selfishness of the age, or to reform the community. Says the journalist, again, above quoted, "Church [the Church] acts on the strongest motives which the heart of man feels. Religious feeling exercises an authority and power which belong to none other. It speaks from the judgment seat of the conscience, and has for its sanctions the present and eternal interests of men. Its force is felt in the rudest, and in the most cultivated minds—it claims the obedience of all from the highest to the lowest. Whatever, therefore, is supported by a strong religious feeling, will wield a power at once universal and paramount to all other motives. The Church, also, is by its nature and institution an eminently social principle. It rests on feelings and sympathies and wants that are common to all Christians. It is a society of men affected by the same sorrows, opposed by the same enemies, governed by the same head, living under the influence of the same ideas and the same principles; and amidst the trials and sufferings of this life, finding the greatest consolation in the thought that they will hereafter enjoy a pure and unbroken communion with each other and their common Lord. Surely, if the idea of a sympathetic, loving, brotherly-minded union ever dawned on the minds of men, it appeared in the glorious idea of the Christian Church." Education, therefore, it may be observed, is to be *Church* education, or *religious*, as well as physical and intellectual. It should be that which will make us Christians—which will bring us under the strongest, though at the same time gentlest, influences. It should take the human subject at the most tender and flexible period. In infancy and childhood it should bring him, if possible, under the sway of a principle which will ever induce him to do right, to hate wrong and iniquity, and to love truth and holiness. The young should invariably be trained up for a community of Christians. Unless the guidance of this class of mankind, then, be spiritual and religious, all will be lost. It is necessary to perfect the culture of the whole man. It is carrying out the true principles of an effectual guidance and guardianship. It is sorrowful to observe, that a physical and intellectual training, however necessary and desirable, are often otherwise than a blessing, because religion is wanting. Persons may be taught to read and write, and may even make such intellectual progress, as to attend, with understanding and profit, scientific lectures, and yet their hearts may have become exceedingly corrupt, and the increase of knowledge may only serve to propagate, with greater force of thought and organization, doctrines subversive of individual and social happiness, and the salvation of the soul. If the age, as is expected, is to witness improved methods of physical and intellectual training, and as has already been realized in some degree, so much the more necessary is it, that increased attention should be bestowed on the guidance of the immortal soul. What is to become of that, we ask, if it is to be comparatively neglected and forgotten? The precious souls of the rising generation must be cared for. How can fathers and mothers consent to their ruin? How can the Christian Church feel so little interest in this subject, as she often seems to

feel? How can any neglect be justified or excused, on the part of those to whom the care of the young belongs.

As the kind of guidance and training required has been described, another inquiry arises, and that is, to whom are we to look for it—from what sources is it to come?

The chief and original source is *God*. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" God, we would say to all the young, is your *heavenly* Father, and he is especially and above all others, to be looked to as the guide of your youth. His guidance is effectual. Whoever seeks and obtains the influence of his grace is trained up, as he should be, in the paths of piety and peace. What an education the Spirit of God bestows! He only can save you from all sin. Whom God teaches and instructs and controls, none can mislead or destroy. He is the Maker of your frame—the Father of your spirit. From him cometh down every good and perfect gift. It is his work to regenerate and sanctify the corrupt heart.

But there are *instrumental means or sources* of youthful training and education which God has appointed directly or through his providence, of great importance to the end proposed.

As, first, your *parents* or *guardians*. These are the first natural guides of the young and inexperienced. They are committed into the hands of parents and guardians for this express purpose. And they neglect their solemn obligation, who are not duly anxious to guide their tender and beloved charge aright—who care little for their correct physical and intellectual education, but especially who care little for their religious and spiritual education. Alas! to be indifferent to the morals and piety of their children—to be to them blind guides, or no guides in religion! What a melancholy failure—what a fearful delinquency! Happy are those parents who feel a due interest and take commendable pains in the education of their offspring—in their right and religious guidance! They have embarked in a good cause, and on the faithful execution of their trust a world of happiness depends. The immortal souls of their children—how should they labor for such an interest! Can they see those who are so near and dear to them, in all the corruption of their nature, without concern! Can they bear to witness their everlasting destruction. The strong sympathies of parents should be called up, more generally than they have been, to this subject.

Again, the several appointed *teachers* of the young, aside from parents, are their guides. These, among others, are the providential instruments of the training, educating process. Teaching, though but a part of education, is an important part of it. Here come in the various classes of designated instructors, who all have an influence in forming the youthful mind—as the common-school teacher, or generally the teacher in literary studies, the Sabbath-school teacher, and the ministerial teacher. Each of these has his appropriate province of effort and influence. What each says or does, contributes to the welfare or woe of the children placed under his care. Their characters are in a rapidly forming process; and holiness or sin, happiness or misery, respectability or infamy, will be the consequence. Heaven or hell will be

peopled, according as the influence exerted is in agreement with Scripture, or in opposition to it. How important that every class of instructors, and each individual instructor, should be such as is desirable, in view of the infinite interests at stake! All should realize their fearful responsibilities. The *literary* teacher certainly occupies an important field. He commonly is called earlier to the task, and takes the mind in first opening childhood. How essential is it, in addition to mere knowledge, that right moral principles should be instilled, and virtuous and obedient habits should be formed in the case of every pupil! The *Sabbath-school* teacher also occupies a most important province. *Religious* instruction is more particularly his object—an acquaintance with the doctrines, principles, and facts contained in the holy Scriptures. How solemn and interesting the employment—how dignified and useful, and what a field for benevolent effort! The late deceased President of the United States, is said to have been a Sabbath-school teacher, and weekly occupied in the religious instruction of the young, to the time of his appointment to the chief magistracy of the nation. We hardly know in which station he was the more elevated, or more an object of admiration. An example truly may he be, in all future time, to all men in our country, who are high in public favor or office! The *ministerial* teacher holds his very essential place in the educational economy. Every one endowed with that solemn trust, should feel his peculiar responsibility—his interesting relations to the young of his flock, as well as to the adult portion of it. What he teaches and what he does, must tell with effect on the everlasting condition of precious souls. O how pertinent, then, is the interrogation of the apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?" What need of heavenly wisdom and grace, and of an untiring, persevering spirit of faithfulness!

Again, we come to another source or means of the education of youth, and that is the *books* which they read. These of course passively do their part in forming the minds and character of the young. In some instances they have a greater effect than any other means, especially where a child has a particular fondness for reading. His books are most effectual inspirers of his sentiments and feelings—the most powerful teachers to him of morality and religion, or of their opposites. Few books are written, unless it be purely scientific works, without having a moral character of some kind, good or bad—without teaching truth or error, and making a right or wrong impression as to spiritual things. Books are but a transcript of the minds and hearts of their authors; and as these were imbued with correct religious feelings or not, so will their works be stamped with the features of goodness or depravity. It is of indescribable moment, then, of what character are children's books—the books which they read. They should by no means be suffered to read everything indiscriminately. Judgment and care should be employed in the selection of works for their use. The question to be decided here is, what books will improve their minds, strengthen their judgments, refine their taste, regulate their passions, and inspire them with a love of knowledge, virtue, and religion, as well

as furnish innocent amusement and recreation. There is need of direction here from older and more experienced persons. The volumes usually found in Sabbath-school libraries, especially if published under the auspices of the American Sunday School Union, though many others also from private individual presses are very good, are doubtless among the safest for the use of children. They are designed to be not merely entertaining and harmless, but useful and instructive, in a high degree. They are, indeed, most of them powerful auxiliaries to the cultivation of pure morals and sound religion, both in the young and old. It is not possible to conceive of how much good they have been productive, taking in the whole range of existence, the present and the future. If fiction is sometimes employed, it is fiction teaching truth, although it is not advisable to have a great preponderance of fiction, in any shape. Solid, substantial, instructive, entertaining works—entertaining to the understanding and heart, and not to the fancy merely,—should be sought for the Sabbath-school library. In short, the most approved works on morals and religion, within the means possessed, should be found on its shelves. In such a library the inhabitants of every parish in the land ought to feel an interest, for their own good, and the welfare of their children after them.

4. There is one other source of youthful guidance and training which is of a miscellaneous kind, and that is, *whatever* the child *hears or sees*—whatever he *comes in contact with*. This is, in some sense, a law of nature—a law of moral nature. We are educated by all that is around us, in the world of matter or of mind. Education is not altogether an affair of books and lessons. There are other powerful agents that give a direction to its course. The tone of feeling which prevails in the circle where young minds are placed, the kind of sentiments which they hear expressed at every hour of the day by those to whose authority they look up, the example set them by their parents and schoolfellows, are all highly influential in giving a bias to the character; in some cases much more influential than the precepts of teachers or the good advice of books. "If a child," says one, "hears the language of disaffection or moral depravity at home, the hours which he spends at school will little avail against it. And even if they did some little to produce an opposite state of the mind, that little would soon be lost, when the child goes abroad in the world, and is merged in the great body of his class. These influences have not been sufficiently considered, in what has been said about education." They are, however, it may be observed, beginning to be understood, and they ought to be seriously regarded. The evils arising from such a source should be watched and guardeu against. Let not the souls of our dear children be jeoparded from this quarter or any other, so far as our example and interference can prevent such a result. Indeed, brethren, we have a great work to do, and it concerns us to be faithfully and diligently engaged in it.

We have dwelt above on one of the most considerable of human, and even of divine operations, in this world, and that is the preparation of the young for the duties of time and the destinies of eternity. To train

generation after generation, in such a manner, is worthy of the energies of the Holy Spirit, and of every consistent effort of man. If the proper instrumental agency were not wanting, this object would be accomplished. God is not slow to regard and bless the efforts of the benevolent and pious, in such a cause. In proportion to the enlargement of their views on this subject, and their practical committal to it, are precious results realized. This has always been the case, and is especially noticeable in these days. We have every encouragement arising from the favor with which God has regarded the efforts hitherto made. Let them, therefore, be redoubled on the part of all who are responsible for the right direction of our youth. Every one should engage in the enterprise with renewed ardor and diligence. The prospect of increasing success, is graduated by the advantages which have been already gained. There is a less force of resistance, as the number is increased of those who are rescued from ignorance and sin, through the efforts which have been put forth. So, also, if one whole generation, as it springs up, could be brought under the right influence, the work would, in a certain sense, be achieved. The subsequent generations would be placed under the most favorable circumstances in regard to their training. There would be, in that case, a preparation on the part of every one who had the care of the young, by a disposition to seek the divine blessing, and by the power of example, to exert a happy influence on each rising race. Correct views, then, of what is to be done, and of the agencies to be employed, should be aimed at, and these have been briefly and summarily attempted above.

On the guidance pointed out depends the welfare in particular of the coming generation, for this world and the next. The preservation of our institutions in this land—the salvation of the nation itself—is most intimately connected with the sort of education which has been described. Indeed, without it, as generally adopted, the world cannot be converted. The abounding of crime as it is now known near and abroad, notwithstanding many precious reformations already commenced, must alone, if not checked, inevitably put to hazard every valuable institution of every land. The only remedy is in the right education of the young, taking the term in the extended sense in which it has been here employed. The multiplication of crime, in these days, has awakened a strong concern in the minds of reflecting and benevolent men. How it shall be made to cease is the great question. Continued and repeated experiments in prison discipline may do something; but if they are not more successful generally than they have been heretofore, very little amelioration as to this evil is to be hoped for. The diminution of crime in the community is to be sought, not so much in the reformation of criminals, though that object deserves every effort, as in preventing men from becoming criminals. And such preventing is not to be found, short of the course of Christian education which has been pointed out. The great principle to be established is, that a man should be made to possess a control over himself. In this effort of an early and wise discipline we are to look for the prevention of crime. Crime originates from

the corrupt passions and appetites of men. Control these, and you lay the axe at the root of the evil. Propelled by raging, ungoverned desires, people commit wrong, in many cases, without taking punishment into the account. *That*, in the strong working of their lusts, they did not perhaps think of; or if they did, they hoped to evade or brave it. But take from the mind the desire of crime, by pre-occupying it with that which is better, and you effectually of course annihilate the evil.

If these views needed any recommendation or enforcement, in the present age, aside from the wants of the age itself, we are happy to refer to the writings of a prince,* who has deemed the subject of sufficient importance to occupy his anxious thoughts and reflections, as preparatory to the wielding of an ancient sceptre. We give an extract of a sentence or two as quoted by a reviewer. "The want of more general education," he says, "occupies the very first place, and the surest method of advancing this national concernment, is the establishment of popular schools, which shall teach not merely a certain amount of worldly knowledge, but also a *deep religious feeling*. Without this harmonious development of understanding and feeling, the reading of a catechism will degenerate into an empty and meaningless act of memory, and practical knowledge will be easily degraded into a dangerous tool for corrupt purposes."

Beyond, too, the prevention of crime, the correct training of the young is generally essential to the formation of a character, such as God approves, and such as he connects with the eternal enjoyment of himself. Without it we cannot consistently expect in our children the fruits of piety, the beauties of holiness. A motive then, of inconceivable weight, urges us to the performance of duty.

In conclusion; will not the young, in view of the infinite interests at stake in their own case, so far as they are able to understand their duty, seek to realize the objects of that training and guidance which they need? Will you not do this by exercising that teachableness—that earnest attention to instruction—that imitation of wise examples, so becoming to your age, and so necessary to the attainment of the end in view. Especially will you not go to God, the Saviour, that he, by his Spirit may form your hearts anew? Will you not, each one, from this time forth, this period of your commencing probation, cry, "My father, thou art the guide of my youth?" In vain will your parents and elders labor to accomplish an object so desirable in your case, without your aid and co-operation. To no purpose will religious means be used, or the Spirit of God strive with your hearts, without your own voluntary agency, in seeking and obeying him.

* Oscar, Crown Prince of Sweden and Norway, author of a work on Crimes and Punishments.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 10. Vol. XVI.) OCTOBER, 1842. (Whole No. 190.

SERMON CCCXXXIII.

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Preached to the General Association of Connecticut, at Wethersfield, June 21st, 1842.

THE DAY APPROACHING.

"And he said to them, Go ye unto all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."—Mark xvi., 15.

"And so much the more as ye see the day approaching."—Heb. x., 25.

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred and people."—Rev. xiv., 6.

The time is to come when the world will be filled with the knowledge, the fear, and the praise of God. Not always will war deluge the earth with fire and blood. Not always will idolatry offend the heavens with its abominations. Not always will despotism, political and spiritual, national and domestic, degrade and corrupt the masses of mankind. Not always will superstition on the one hand, and infidelity on the other, reject and despise the blessed revelation of forgiveness for sinners through Jesus the Lamb of God. Not always will cold philosophy, and erratic enthusiasm, and fanaticism fierce and malignant, conspire to corrupt and pervert the Gospel itself, turning even the streams from the fountain of life into waters of bitterness and poison. No, no, the time will come when the sun in his daily journey round the renovated world, shall waken with his morning beam in every human dwelling, the voice of joyful, thankful, spiritual worship. Then shall the boundless soul of Immanuel, who once travailed in the agony of the world's redemption, "be satisfied" with his victories over death and sin. The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and with garlands of everlasting joy; and from the earth, no longer accursed for the sake of man, sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

This is to be held as one of the grand doctrines of Christianity. After those truths which relate directly to the reconciliation of the individual sinner to his God, no doctrine is more important than this. It is a doctrine which stands out in the foreground of the Christian revelation, whether in the Old Testament or in the New. It is a doc-

trine not for a speculative belief merely, but revealed to fire the soul with that spirit of beneficent enterprise and action, which is one of the chief elements of Christian character. He who reads the Bible in a docile and obedient spirit, finds this doctrine filling his soul with vast conceptions and the loftiest hopes; giving a dignity to his humblest labors for the cause of Christ: throwing a new light upon the world and its history; and teaching him to see in all changes the progress of that mighty providence which, brooding over the chaos of this ruined world, now in silence and now amid the roar of warring elements, is slowly but infallibly accomplishing its own great purposes. The believer truly enlightened, keeps his eye fixed in faith and hope upon the angel flying in the midst of Heaven, and having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, even to every nation and kindred and tongue and people.

The text—"so much the more as ye see the day approaching"—has been chosen, not because it speaks of this doctrine of the universal triumph of the gospel, but rather because it involves a principle which bears upon the application of this doctrine to ourselves as an incentive to hope and to effort. It may be most reasonably expected that as the day approaches for the universal extension of Christ's kingdom, there will be signs of its approach, which faith may discern; and in the discovery of which, faith will be strengthened, and zeal incited to new energy and greater self-denial. It is most reasonable to expect that as the day approaches, exigencies will arise, demanding of the people of God more faith, more diligence, more of the exercise of that spirit which renounces all for Christ.

Let us dwell upon this thought for a few moments, and upon its application to our times and to our duty. *In proportion as the day of the universal triumph of the gospel is seen to be approaching, the people of Christ in all the world will be called to greater and greater efforts for the accomplishment of that result.*

The nature of the case, and the general course of prophetic Scripture, lead us to expect that as the time approaches for the universal triumph of the gospel, great and rapid changes will take place in the condition of the nations. The providence of God, arranging all things for so great a result, will prepare the way. The power of Anti-Christian governments must be broken; the structure of society, which dooms vast masses of mankind to helpless degradation, must be changed, wherever it exists; the means of communication between the most distant regions of the globe must become adequate to so great an achievement as the illumination of every tribe and people under Heaven. When we see such changes rapidly going forward—when we see God in his providence making all things ready for the setting up of the kingdom of Christ everywhere,—then, in such signs of the times, we may see the day approaching. Such a preparation there was, in God's providence, before the incarnation of the Saviour and the consequent promulgation of the gospel. The then known world, after having been for ages shaken with incessant wars, was at peace. One strong

government extended its authority over nations the most distant from each other, and the most diverse in speech and lineage, in manners and religion. Long lines of constant communication, were drawn out in every direction from the imperial city to the boundaries of universal empire, upon which the traveller passed in safety, and found himself everywhere under the protection of the same laws administered by the same authority. Everywhere one language was the chief language of commerce, of learning and of the arts. Everywhere there were found, in the cities, some fragments of the dispersion of that one peculiar people, who alone, of all the kindreds of the earth, worshipped the one living God. From this peculiar people, who in all their dispersions looked for the hope of Israel, there had gone out everywhere the expectation—more or less distinct—of some new order of things soon to be set up, and of a great deliverer soon to appear. He who in that age had seen and considered the full preparation which God had made for a mighty change, would have been persuaded, beyond all doubt, that such a change was impending. So if at any time we see the God of nations making rapid preparation, on the widest scale, for that great moral revolution which the scriptures teach us to expect, then we may be sure that we see the day approaching.

Yet there is no reason to expect that these changes will be such as to supersede the necessity of human effort in the propagation of the gospel. Why should such a thing be thought of? From the beginning of Christ's personal ministry to this hour, where has the gospel been propagated, or made known among men, otherwise than by human efforts? No mountain like Sinai of old, has quaked and trembled under the footsteps of God manifesting himself visibly, and proclaiming his will with the voice of words to an assembled nation. No angel voices tell on earth the story of redeeming love, since that night in which the shepherds of Bethlehem heard the song of "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men." The gospel, from the date of its first promulgation, has ever been propagated among men by the instrumentality of men—by the one simple process of preaching and teaching; and nowhere do we find reason to expect its propagation through the world by any more miraculous process. The changes, then, which God in his providence may make among the nations, preparatory to the final conquests of the cross, instead of being such as to supersede the necessity of human co-operation in the work, will, on the contrary, be such as to open the way for effort, and to throw upon the friends of Christ everywhere the responsibility of going right forward to complete the work of teaching all nations. They may be expected to be analogous to those changes which prepared the way for the propagation of the gospel by the first disciples of the Savior. The apostles and their associates did not find that what God had done, providentially or miraculously, had released them at all from the necessity of effort. If God had opened the door before them in every direction, it was only that *they* might enter in to do their work. If he gave them the gift of tongues, it was only that *they* might speak to every man in his own

language. If he equipped them with miraculous powers to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cast out devils in his name, it was only that *they* might speak with more authority as preachers and teachers of the word. So, in regard to the changes which may prepare the way for the triumph of the gospel, no more is to be expected than that the world is to be brought into such a state, as that the word of the Lord published and spread abroad, may have free course and be glorified. Simultaneously with political and social changes taking place in the progress of God's providence, there may be also a work of God's Spirit upon the minds of men, and there must be, or the gospel will not triumph; but neither will this take away the necessity of human co-operation. The Spirit of God may move upon the minds of heathen nations, teaching them to regard their base superstitions with disgust and contempt, exciting them to look with eyes of expectation towards Christian countries, and even predisposing them to receive the gospel as soon as it is made known to them; but even then, when all this has been done, there will remain the necessity of effort on the part of God's people to publish the gospel to a world made ready to receive it. Not only so, but every such indication of the approach of that latter day—every change in the condition of the world which facilitates the propagation and the progress of the gospel, will call the churches to so much the more of diligence and self-denial.

Suppose, now, that among the indications of the approach of that expected day, there should be new and remarkable effusions of reviving grace upon the churches—the awakening of a spirit of enterprise and prayer for the conversion of the world—the ingathering of increasing multitudes into the fold of Christ in Christian lands—and success hardly inferior to that of apostles, crowning the efforts of missionaries abroad. What would be the natural and just inference from such indications of the progress of God's redeeming work in this world? Would it be that the churches having done so much, and with so great a blessing, might be satisfied with their attainments, and attempt nothing beyond the mark of the earnestness in prayer, the liberality in contribution, and the self-denial in action, which they had already exhibited? Would it not rather be, Forsake not your holy enterprises and endeavors, be courageous, be self-denying, quit yourselves like men, and be strong, enlarge your plans and expectations, increase by continual exercise the spirit of self-consecration to the Savior, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.

The outline of the argument which I have so hastily and imperfectly presented, is this:

I. It is reasonable to expect that as the day of Christ's universal triumph approaches, its approach will be indicated by great and rapid changes in the condition of the nations.

II. There is no reason to presume that these changes will supersede at all God's established order of making the gospel known by human instrumentality; but, on the contrary, it may be expected that the

changes will be such as to open the way for effort in the propagation of the gospel, and to call forth the energies of all the people of God.

III. The analogies of God's providence and grace in times past, lead us to believe that the effusions of the Holy Spirit to be expected in connection with those necessary changes in the political and social condition of mankind, will be nothing else than the Spirit of God moving the churches to faith and zeal and love, and giving greater and greater success to the published word of God. This effusion of the Spirit then, both upon the church and upon the world at large, while it indicates the approach of the day of Christ's triumph, will call out the followers of Christ everywhere to greater efforts—efforts still increasing as the day approaches.

We now proceed to the inquiry, How far does all this concern us as living in these times? And,

First, Are there any signs of the times which indicate that the day *is* approaching? Are there any changes taking place—any revolutions going on in the world, which either in themselves, or in connection with the lights of prophecy, lead us to expect the universal spread and triumph of the gospel as drawing near?

I will not attempt in this place any exposition of those prophetic scriptures which are so commonly regarded as designed to make known to the curious the times and the seasons. And to speak plainly, I could not argue with confidence from any of those schemes of prophetic chronology which ingenious men have built upon a few passages of Daniel and of John, either misunderstood and misapplied, or else obscure and cabalistic beyond all other passages of inspiration. Yet we may say, with perfect confidence, that in whatever form the opposition of hell to the kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit may array itself, that opposition will surely be defeated. This is the one great lesson of prophecy. Under whatever image Antichrist appears, persecuting the saints, and triumphing for a season his destiny is the same; he must perish. See you that great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, with God's last witnesses, as it were, lying slain in its streets? Those witnesses rise again; a voice from heaven summons them upward; as they go, the earthquake shakes the guilty city; and hark! the seventh angel sounds, and the victory is the Lord's. See you the dragon drawing after him the stars, and casting them to the earth, and ready to devour the feeble and fleeing church? The dragon is cast down from heaven, and Michael and his angels triumph. See you the beast rising out of the sea, to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and his helper, the false prophet, deceiving by lying wonders them that dwell on the earth? Lo! the beast is taken, and the false prophet that wrought miracles before him; and both are cast into a lake of fire. See you Babylon the great upon her seven hills, drunken with the blood of the saints? Great Babylon comes into remembrance before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath; and lo! another angel comes, and the earth is lightened with his glory, and he cries mightily,

saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." See you Satan going forth once more to deceive the nations, and to assemble them for yet another conflict, bringing Gog and Magog from the four quarters of the earth to encompass the camp of the saints and the beloved city? Lo! fire comes down from God out of heaven, and destroys them. Thus it is with all the enterprises of the gates of hell; they may seem prosperous for a season, but soon they perish. There are many Antichrists, but every one of them shall be defeated. This cheers the "little flock" when the forces of evil seem everywhere triumphant; for they know that the profoundest darkness can be only for a season. This gives strength and certainty to their hopes when the darkness begins to abate; for in the earliest streak of dawn they see the day approaching.

What then are the signs which we behold as we look around us? What are the recent changes and the changes, now in progress, which indicate a crisis near at hand? Popery as a political power—Popery as a power to oppress and persecute the gospel—has long been waning and decaying; and who would be surprised if within five years, the Bishop of Rome should even cease to have a place among the sovereignties of Europe, and should become as powerless in respect to persecution as the Bishop of New York? Mohammedism, too, considered in the same light, as a political persecuting power, is failing and passing away. The old empire founded by Mohammed himself more than twelve hundred years ago, which threatened for ages to extinguish the very name of Christianity—the old empire perpetuated so long under the sway of Caliph and Sultan, is held together, as it were for an hour, by external force, and at some early opportunity must fall for ever. The providence of God is causing revolutions everywhere; and the great tide of revolution dashing upon every shore, is everywhere tending manifestly in one direction. There is not a revolution that does not cast down some obstacle to the progress of the gospel. There is not a revolution that does not open the way somewhere for the word of God to run and have free course and be glorified. Almost every region of the globe is now open in a greater or less extent to the access of the gospel.

Less than two hundred years ago, it happened in free and Protestant England, that nearly two thousand devoted and skilful preachers of the gospel were in one day not only turned out of their pulpits, but silenced by an act of government, and forbidden to preach the gospel, even at their own charges. One of those silenced ministers was Richard Baxter. And as he, growing old in that enforced cessation from his work, reviewed his life and chronicled his experience, he said, "My soul is much more afflicted with the thoughts of this miserable world, and more drawn out in desire of its conversion than heretofore. I was wont to look but little further than England in my prayers, not considering the state of the rest of the world; or if I prayed for the conversion of the Jews, that was almost all. But now as I better understand the case of the world, and the method of the Lord's prayer, there is nothing in the

world that lieth so heavy upon my heart as the thought of the miserable nations of the earth. I cannot be affected so much with the calamities of my own relations or the land of my nativity, as with the case of the heathen, Mohammedan, and ignorant nations of the earth. No part of my prayers is so deeply serious as that for the conversion of the infidel and ungodly world, that God's name may be sanctified and his kingdom come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Nor was I ever before so sensible, what a great sin tyranny is, which keepeth out the gospel from most of the nations of the world. Could we but go among Tartars, Turks, and heathens, and speak their language, I should be but little troubled for the silencing of eighteen hundred ministers at once in England, nor for all the rest that were cast out here and in Scotland and Ireland, there being no employment in the world so desirable in my eyes as to labor for the winning of such miserable souls, which maketh me greatly honor Mr. John Eliot, the apostle of the Indians in New England, and whoever else have labored in the work."

Suppose, now, that while Baxter, in sadness, and perhaps in prison, breathed out these holy aspirations, he had been suddenly transferred from those times to these. Suppose that waking, as from a troubled dream, he had found that in his own loved England, tyranny—at least such tyranny was at an end, and the gospel was free. Suppose he had been told, France is open, and Spain is open for evangelical effort. Suppose he had been told, Turkey is open, Greece is free; all Asia Minor is open from Troas to Ephesus; Syria and the Holy Land are open; and still further east, the wide realms of Chaldea and old Assyria and Persia are open; and still beyond, upon the Indus, where Alexander's march of conquest spent itself, and upon the Ganges, where millions upon millions crowd the broad provinces from the mountains of Thibet to the spice groves of Ceylon, the gospel may be preached in freedom and peace under the shelter of an English government; and still beyond, Burmah and Siam are open to the gospel; China, too, is shaking with the roar of the revolution that is to break down her old barriers. Suppose he had been told, Africa too, at a thousand points, from Egypt and Abyssinia to her Southern Cape, is open to the Christian teacher. Suppose he had been told, America, where the good Eliot first made a barbarous tongue musical with the gospel, is a vast free Christian empire, and there, where willing exiles from every crowded kingdom of Europe meet to learn new principles, and to transmit to their posterity the English language and more than English freedom; *there* is one great hope for the ignorant and dying world—thence light and truth go forth, east, west, north, south, to all the nations. How would the holy man have lifted up his hands in wonder, in delight, in praise. "Behold!" methinks I hear him say, "Behold the day approaching!"

We are living, then, amid great and rapid changes, which indicate that the day of the world's renovation is drawing near. But,

In the *second* place, these changes thus crowding upon each other in

this eventful age, are none of them of such a nature as to supersede the necessity of effort for the propagation of the gospel. They only make such efforts practicable and hopeful. They only prepare the way of the Lord; they are not his actual coming. They cast down the mountains, they exalt the valleys; they make the crooked places straight and the rough places plain, that the king may come in his glory; and the appearance of such changes is the summons to his people, Go ye out to meet him. The Lord himself is not in the whirlwind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire; but these things, striking the world with awe, are the heralds of his coming; and when the still small voice of his gospel is heard among all nations—still and small indeed amid the crash of ruin, while thrones and temples, powers and systems are falling, and the roar of unchained nations is like the sound of many waters —when once that still small voice, the simple story of the gospel told by humble praying tongues, is heard in all the dwellings of mankind; then let God's witnesses everywhere wrap their faces in their mantles to adore. But while these changes are in progress, and there yet remains work to be done, let us who are of God's host be up and doing—and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

Look at another aspect of the condition of the world. Not only is the way open or opening everywhere for the evangelist to enter; but everywhere God is predisposing and preparing men to give to those who preach his gospel an attentive hearing. By one influence and another under the arrangements of Almighty Providence, it has come to pass that all the world, so to speak, is in expectation of a change. A deep conviction of the superiority of Christian nations, and with it the inference that their superiority is in some way connected with the religion which they profess, is everywhere impressed upon the heathen, and even upon the proud Mohammedan. The Jew, too, wearied with waiting, and long disappointed while cycle after cycle of his hopes has been fulfilled in vain, is at the point of abandoning his expectation of a Messiah yet to come, and is even now beginning to look back and inquire whether that great deliverer has not come and been rejected. Who shall tell us that the Spirit of God is not even now—amid the darkness that covers the nations—moving upon the chaotic elements, and by an influence beyond and above all second causes, preparing for the access of light and life? How rarely, in these days, does the teacher of Christianity begin his labors among the benighted without finding, at least in the willingness of men to hear him, the effect of some mysterious preparation. And how often has one benighted tribe and another, one nation and another, unexpectedly, and to human view spontaneously, sent forth its petition for Christian teachers. What signs of the times are these—how do they cheer the followers of Christ in their attempts to teach all nations! And instead of superseding the necessity for human instrumentality, they summon the Churches everywhere to increased prayer, and toil, and self-denial, as if angels were shouting to us from their unseen sphere, "So much the more as ye see the day approaching."

It is also to be remarked, in the *third* place, that simultaneously with these changes in the condition of the world at large, there has been a gradual reviving of the spirit of apostolic piety, and of religious action and enterprise in all Christendom. The Churches, delivered from the power of persecution, and from that hardly less disastrous alliance with the civil power, which is founded on the principle of persecution, have been refreshed and enlarged. The spirit of prayer for the conversion of the world has been awakened. Millions of voices are daily uttering that petition "thy kingdom come," with a new fervor of desire and of faith. The actual enterprise of converting the world, has been commenced with a calm and resolute zeal, a confidence of ultimate success, a spontaneous yet systematised combination of efforts, a liberality in contribution, and an energy in action, which, in their steady progress, make it more and more manifest that the finger of God is in the movement. Thus, while God in his mysterious workings has been preparing the world at large for a great and universal moral revolution, he has also been training and furnishing the Churches of Protestant Christendom, to take advantage of the crisis, and to carry the story of Christ and redemption to all mankind. Look at what he is doing for the Churches and in the Churches—see how he is setting them free from old encumbrances—see how he is multiplying their numbers—see how he is augmenting their resources and means of action—see how he is pouring out his Spirit upon them, and bidding them arise and shine—see the multitudes of young men endowed with gifts of nature and of education, whom his Spirit converts and calls to serve him in the gospel, and whom the Churches may equip and send forth to fill the world with light. Say what do these things mean in respect to what is just before us? Do these signs show that God will dispense with the instrumentality of human efforts in completing that great moral revolution which seems everywhere impending? Or do they rather show that he intends to have the gospel preached by human voices in every land and in every language, and that he would have his servants "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," and so much the more as they see the day approaching.

And what *success* has thus far attended the enterprise of converting the world by the foolishness of preaching? I may not occupy your time with the statistics of the missionary enterprise at large, nor even with the details of the success which has crowned those efforts in which it has been our privilege to participate. But I may direct your attention, for a moment, to those familiar facts in this one point of view. In the work of evangelizing the heathen and Mohammedan nations, every success is an expansion of the work, and every expansion creates an imperious necessity for new exertions. When the missionary in some dark land finds the tokens of an approaching revolution manifesting themselves around him—when inquirers begin to come around him by day and by night—one by one, or in companies—when his schools are thronged in consequence of an awakened thirst for knowledge in a barbarous people—when a clamor for Bibles, and for Christian tracts

and books, breaks forth on his right hand and on his left, from a people who have learned the use of letters—when converts begin to be multiplied under his teaching, and need, because they are converts, the more instruction and the more watchfulness—what are all these indications of success but the rapid expansion of his work?—and as his work grows under his hand, he must have larger means and new helpers, or else he dies exhausted and broken down amid his triumphs. Thus, while God in his providence gives us free and safe access to the nations, and is at the same time giving us peace and prosperity at home, and abundant instrumentalities and resources for the prosecution of the work, he is all the while leading us on in a way in which it is impossible to retreat, and impossible to stand still, without dishonor, not to ourselves only, but to him whose name we bear and to whose cause we are devoted. Thus, the wonderful and increasing success of our missionary work, continually betokening the approach of that bright day when Christ shall reign over all the earth, is continually laying upon the Churches a necessity, inevitable except by the most dishonorable retreat from the most glorious of enterprises—a necessity not only to go on, but to go on with so much the more earnestness and faith and self-denial.

Fathers and brethren in the ministry of the Gospel, the application of all this to us, in our public employment and relations, is too obvious to require an argument. We live, we are entrusted with this sacred ministry, in the twilight, as it were, of that day which faith has so long seen approaching. We are called to instruct and animate the Churches, to guard them from danger, and to lead them on to every holy enterprise, at this peculiar crisis in the history of redemption. Our commission is like that once given to Moses, "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." We are to understand, we are to make the Churches understand, that God calls us not to rest satisfied with past achievements or with present success, but to attempt greater and greater things, and to expect in each attempt greater and still greater results. Oh! what have we done—what have our Churches done—that any of us should speak or feel as if we had already reached the limit of enterprise or of achievement?

Assembled as we are, "to consult the duties of our office, and the common interest of the Churches," it becomes us to remember and to remind each other, how much is depending on the fidelity and the skill with which our work is done. Our position as ministers of the word, and as pastors of these favored Churches, has an importance ever increasing, as the progress of events brings us nearer to the expected triumph of our Redeemer over all the earth. Whether these Churches will do their part in the work of making the Gospel known to every creature, must depend, under God, on the intelligence, the earnestness, and the diligence, with which they are taught and guided by their pastors. Let them have a cold-hearted, secularized, easy, slothful ministry—let them have a ministry holding the form of godliness and orthodoxy, but denying its power—let them have a ministry uninstructed in

the things of the kingdom of God, unable to divide the word of truth, or to discern the wheat from the chaff—let them have an unsound, enthusiastic, revolutionary ministry, seizing upon every novelty, turned about by every wind of doctrine, rushing headlong into every ill-considered project—let them have any ministry not qualified by gifts and graces to produce a sound, enlightened, manly, self-denying piety; and how soon would the disaster be felt, not here only, but everywhere. Let the Spirit of God descend with his reviving grace upon their souls—let the number of them that worship in spirit and in truth, presenting themselves to God a living sacrifice, be multiplied in these parishes; and instantly a new energy is manifested in every department of the Divine enterprise of evangelizing the world.

By what motives, then, are we urged to fidelity in our work as pastors and leaders of the flock of God? Our success in this work is to save the souls of those who hear us, and is to leave the light of pure Christianity still radiant on these hills after we shall have been gathered to our fathers. Nor is this all. Our success in this work, or our failure, has, in these days, an obvious and immediate connection with the advancement of God's designs of mercy for all nations. In such times as these, the zeal, the purity, the spiritual prosperity and progress of these Churches,—or their languor and sloth, their declension and decay,—is felt at once, far and near, in its effects on the progress of Christ's universal kingdom. It is felt, far west, beyond the Mississippi, where, in that confluence of emigration, the home missionary, sustained by our churches, gathers around him the children of our fathers, in some log hut, or under some spreading shade, and waking in their hearts kind memories of the homes, the sanctuaries, and the graves of "old Connecticut," bids them not forget their fathers' God. It is felt in those distant isles, where the missionary from our shores sees a regenerated nation, and hears from glen, and vale, and ragged cliff, sweet songs of praise, mingled with the everlasting anthem of the ocean. It is felt in all the tropic climes of eastern Asia, where Apostolic men, in our behalf, and depending on our fidelity to the cause, are establishing Churches and Christian schools, and the mighty enginery of the press, for the illumination of those countless millions. It is felt in the old haunts of Grecian genius, where Athens and Corinth receive once more the simple doctrine of Jesus and the resurrection from those whom God has sent by our instrumentality, and where the men of Macedonia are calling for our help. It is felt under the waning crescent of the Turk, where the Armenian trafficker, to whom the pearl of great price is sent from these occidental shores, rises up to demand of his priestly oppressors freedom and the keys of heaven. Lebanon feels it—"that goodly mountain," where the untamed Arab and the wilder Druse listen to our brethren, and weep over the sod that covers precious dust which we have loved. The Nestorian feels it, as from his "misty mountain-tops," and from the mouth of each old cavern sanctuary, he looks with hope too long deferred to catch the day-spring strangely dawning in the west. Thus it is, brethren, that in such a time as this, when the redemption of all nations is drawing nigh,

our position as pastors of these favored Churches involves a responsibility continually increasing. Lowly and narrow as each one of us may feel to be the sphere of his immediate agency, the influence of what we do, or fail to do, in our humble places—the influence of God's blessing on our faithfulness, or of his frown on our slothfulness and cowardice, goes out from where we stand, as if on some electric chain, reaching from station to station till it encircles the world.

With such thoughts as these enlarging our views and glowing in our hearts, let us "consult the duties of our office and the common interest of the Churches." With such thoughts let us gird ourselves anew for labor. Remembering that the field is the world, and that Christ's followers are to preach the gospel to every creature; and watching with holy sympathy the progress of the angel flying in the midst of Heaven; let us pray and labor, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

O, that approaching day! What though its full splendor may not shine upon these mortal eyes! We will do our part, God helping us, and then its light shall be the brighter on our graves; and when we look down on the new earth from the new Heaven, we will sing the louder in the chorus of the morning stars, and our voices shall mingle with a more triumphant gladness in the acclamations of the sons of God.

SERMON CCCXXXIV.

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THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO CHRISTIANS, A PREPARATION FOR THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS.

"Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."—PSALMS, li. 11, 12, 13.

THE psalm of which these words constitute a part, is supposed to have been composed by David, on his recovery from one of those seasons of backsliding, by which his religious experience was diversified. Under the influence of a guilty and debasing passion, he had suffered himself to wander far from him who was the life and spring of his spiritual enjoyments. The gross acts of wickedness, of which he had become guilty in this state of estrangement from God, were faithfully pointed out to him by the prophet Nathan. He was thus brought to a lively conviction of the guilty part which he had been acting. His conscience was roused from its slumbers, and he was made to see how utterly vile he had rendered himself in the sight of God. His mind was filled with shame and self-abhorrence; and he was therefore constrained to take up the language of penitence and confession. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight. For I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me."

From himself, his mind seems then to have turned to others, who might have been affected by his example. As if by his wickedness, he had grieved away that Spirit by which alone he could be prepared successfully to teach the ways of God to others, he supplicated in our text for a return to his heart of the divine presence, and a restoration of that joy which he had experienced before his departures from God. His language is, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

There is a principle, then, involved in this language which may at all times be contemplated with profit by the children of God; and especially when he is not present with them in the reviving influences of his grace. This principle is, that *the presence of God by his Spirit with his children, prepares the way for the salvation of those who are in a state of impenitence.* In the statement of this principle, it will be seen, there is the assertion of an important fact.

I. For evidence of this fact, we shall appeal, in the first place, to the word of God. If the connection of ideas in our text be distinctly

marked, it will be seen how clearly it teaches the truth which we are contemplating. The fact of his teaching transgressors the ways of God, and of his making himself instrumental in the conversion of sinners, is made by the Psalmist to turn upon the question, whether he shall or shall not enjoy the continued presence of God in the joy of his salvation, and in the upholding influences of his Spirit. In the mind of the Psalmist, the one was thus obviously regarded as depending upon the other. He knew that without the presence of God, he could himself possess no spiritual enjoyment; and that without the quickening aids of the divine Spirit, he would be absolutely powerless in his attempts to promote the spiritual interests of others. Successfully to teach others their transgressions, while the guilt of unpardoned sin was resting upon his own conscience, he knew was impossible. To think of conducting sinners to the Most High, when he was himself groping in spiritual darkness—to think of leading them to the pleasures of salvation, when he was himself a stranger to its enjoyments, he knew to be absurd; and his prayer therefore was for the continued presence of God, and for the quickening and life-giving influences of his Spirit.

Nearly allied to our text in its relation to this subject, is the promise of Christ to his disciples, that when, by ascending to the Father, he had withdrawn from them his bodily presence, he would send unto them the Holy Comforter—even the Spirit of truth, who should dwell with them, and teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance. It is accordingly declared by the same Evangelist, who has recorded this promise of the Savior, that after his resurrection from the dead, and before his ascension, he appeared to his disciples whilst they were secretly assembled, and gave them their divine commission. "As my Father hath sent me," said he, "even so send I you." And when he had said this, as if it were necessary to the success of their mission, "he breathed on them and saith unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." It was with the express design of bringing the gospel in its saving influences to bear upon the minds of men, that the disciples were thus commissioned and sent forth. They were to be qualified to act successfully as heralds of their divine Master. They were to be prepared to proclaim Jesus Christ and his gospel throughout the known world. The truths of Christianity were by them to be brought home to the hearts and the consciences of men with a reforming and a saving power. Let then the manner be observed in which they were fitted for this high office by the Savior himself. It was by communicating unto them the Holy Spirit. That which was deemed necessary by him was doubtless indispensable to the success of their labors. He recognized that as true which was afterwards so clearly taught by one of his disciples, that planting and watering in the vineyard of the Lord could be of no avail unless God himself by the energies of his own Spirit should give the increase. He, therefore, gave the Holy Spirit to his disciples, and assured them that his blessed influences should accompany them in all their ways.

But if we follow them in their subsequent labors, and whilst they were engaged in the business of preaching the gospel, we shall be furnished with additional evidence of the fact which we have in view. It is recorded, that on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples were with one accord in one place, the Holy Spirit was imparted to them, in a most surprising and wonderful manner—and that, as the result of this, three thousand were immediately gathered into the Church of Christ. The history of the Church from that day to this, by its accumulation of facts, has been adding to this evidence of the word of God. The experience of Christians in every age has been such, as to justify the expectation, that when God is especially present with them by the influences of his Spirit, men will be converted to the truth, and made partakers in the blessings of salvation. For it is at just those times, when they feel most of the power of religion in their own hearts, that its power is found to be most searching and subduing, upon the hearts of others around them. Men are seen to wake up to a new consciousness of the fact, that they are immortal and accountable beings. The conviction, before vague and indistinct, of their own sinfulness and ill-desert, acquires a strength and vividness, which shew them how utterly lost is their present condition, and how utterly hopeless and miserable they must ever be, unless they are made partakers in the pardoning mercy of God. It is at such times that the inquiry—"what shall I do to be saved?" is made with a deep-meaning honesty and sincerity of heart. The things of eternity are recognized as great and solemn realities, and assume that place in the minds of men, as objects of thought, and as motives to action, which is demanded by their intrinsic importance. How glorious, too, are then seen to be the triumphs of truth, over sinful prejudice and deep-seated errors! And how joyful the songs of gladness from tongues never before vocal in their Maker's praise! What solemnity is then seen to pervade entire communities, as the Spirit goes from heart to heart, and by the still small voice utters his admonitions in the ears of men! Scenes like these have been familiar things in the history of the Church, and as the fruits of divine influence have always attested the presence of God's Spirit among his people.

II. But let us next contemplate some of the reasons for what we have thus seen to be a fact. *Why does the presence of God, by his Spirit, with his children, prepare the way for the salvation of those who are in a state of impenitence?* An answer to this inquiry will be found in the following considerations.

(1.) In the first place, it is by the instrumentality of his children that God carries forward the work of salvation among men. That between this instrumentality and their salvation there is a connection absolute and necessary, we cannot indeed affirm; for it is conceivable that God may employ other agencies, in securing the fulfilment of his purposes of grace. It is not to be supposed that he is limited to any particular set of means, in the accomplishment of those ends at which he is aiming. By his own direct power,—and this, too, without the

agency of his children, in the presentation and exemplification of truth he might bring into willing subjection to himself the hearts of men. But however conceivable this may be, it must yet be admitted that it is not in accordance with God's usual mode of proceeding. It is not by blind and irresistible acts of almighty power that he chooses to control the minds of men. Nor does he see fit to leave them to the simple influence of that truth which, with his own finger, he has inscribed upon the tables of the heart. He does not deem it enough that light has been spread upon the pages of his word, and diffused thus over the face of creation; and that within and around them men have the means of becoming acquainted with his own character and requisitions. He chooses that, in addition to his other instrumentalities, those of his children shall be called into exercise. It is his purpose that they shall make themselves active in his service. He means that their influence shall constitute at least one link in the chain of agencies which connects his own purpose in the far-distant ages of eternity, with its ultimate fulfilment in the developments of his grace and providence on the earth. He hence calls upon his children to be at all times up and doing in his service,—requiring that while engaged in this service, they should ever be fervent in spirit and diligent in business.

(2.) But while it is thus by the agency of his children that God accomplishes his purposes of grace among men, let it be further noticed that it is only by being made partakers in the gift of the Holy Spirit, that they can be prepared successfully to act in his service. It is thus only that they are led to the lively exercise of those graces of the Christian character, which give power and efficacy to their example. As enumerated by the Apostle, these graces are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. It is in the agency of the Spirit that they originate—for they are described as his fruits, and it is by his quickening influence that they are kept alive in the heart. When this influence is imparted in large and unwonted measures, it gives unwonted power and prominence to these elements of Christian character. They shine forth with a brilliancy which attracts the notice of every beholder. They give to the example of Christians its proper influence over the hearts and lives of men—extorting, even from worldliness and unbelief, a reluctant tribute to the excellence of that religion which they profess, and in the eyes of all men, rendering that example a living reproof to the corrupt maxims and practices of the world. In the character which they exhibit there is discovered a degree of strength and harmony, to which they are strangers when the Spirit is absent from their hearts. Their influence upon the minds of others is rendered not only more direct and positive, but it is put forth free from those countervailing influences which at other times arise from the inconsistencies of Christian character and practice. It thus becomes what it was so aptly represented by Christ—the salt of the earth—imparting life and spiritual health to the masses of mind depraved and corrupted by sin which come within its reach.

(3.) But, by the Holy Spirit, Christians are also inspired with a spirit of importunate and prevailing prayer for the salvation of others; and this is another reason why the imparting of divine influence to them prepares the way for the conversion of those who are in a state of impenitence. They are made to feel somewhat of the spirit of the patriarch, when he exclaimed—"Except thou bless me, I will not let thee go." They call to mind the willingness of God to bestow spiritual blessings upon those who seek them. They know that his ear is not heavy, that he cannot hear, nor his arm shortened that he cannot save. They remember the blessed promises which assure them, that if they seek, they shall find, and that if they knock, the door shall be opened. They are hence constrained to give utterance to the language of prayer, and in the exercise of a faith which is unwavering, to look for corresponding results in the conversion of those, upon whose salvation their desires are fixed. If the Spirit has been really imparted to them—if they are made to feel his quickening influence, and his work is rendered deep and radical in their hearts, they must feel earnest desires for the spiritual good of others. They know that God will have respect to these desires, if they are expressed in the language of sincere and importunate prayer; and they therefore act upon the encouragements which he has given them in his word and providence. The Holy Spirit, diffused among the disciples of Christ, is accordingly always found to be a Spirit of prayer. Under his influence upon their hearts, a holy importunity springs up, and its fruit is eternal salvation to those who were lost.

(4.) Again, let it be noticed, that when the Holy Spirit is imparted to the disciples of Christ, they are prompted not only to strong desires, but to special efforts for the salvation of others. Witness the exemplification of this, in those scenes of the day of Pentecost, to which we have referred. How was it, that such multitudes were induced to become the disciples of Jesus, and were thus rendered partakers in the salvation of the gospel? It was by the faithful proclamation of the gospel, after the Spirit had descended upon them, and their minds had become imbued with his quickening and life-giving influences. They were made to see, in the light of eternal truth, how utterly lost and hopeless were the multitudes around them, if they should persist in the rejection of the Savior. The fires of celestial love were kindled in their hearts, and it was the burning desire of their souls that the work of salvation should spread and prevail. They were roused to untiring effort in the service of their divine Master, while they proclaimed the message which he had put into their mouths, and which he had inspired them to utter, with a celestial and miraculous energy. They disguised not the truth, but fearlessly called the multitudes to repent of their guilt contracted by the rejection and death of the Son of God.

Such were the fruits of the Spirit, when his influences were first imparted to the disciples of Christ. Such have they been, from that day to this. Men, before enemies to the cross of Christ, have been brought within his fold, by the special efforts, to which his disciples have been

prompted, under the quickening energies of his Spirit. How immensely have the trophies of divine grace thus been multiplied, as the chariot of salvation has moved on from age to age of the Christian Church! What multitudes, perishing in sin, have been plucked as brands from the burning, and given to the Savior, as the reward of his toils and sufferings upon the earth! In the results of experience, we are thus presented with additional reason, for the fact that when the disciples of Christ are made partakers in the gifts of the Spirit, the way is prepared for the imparting of these gifts, to those who have been living in a state of impenitence and estrangement from God.

I. It is a consideration which gives interest and importance to the subject which we have been contemplating, that it suggests the only true and consistent view of religious revivals. We say this, because, while it points to that in which such revivals originate—viz.: the agency of the Spirit, it also brings into view their natural and legitimate results, in the conversion and salvation of sinners. And this, too, it does in a manner not only accordant with the recorded facts of Scripture, but with the experience of Christians in every age of the Church. It is out of Zion that salvation cometh, and when religion is truly revived, it is in the bosom of the Church that the work commences, and from it that it spreads, as light and heat from the sun to other parts of the material system.

The truth of what has now been said will more fully appear from a few brief considerations. It is in view of their appropriate objects, only, that those feelings can be intelligently manifested which constitute the graces of the Christian character. They can no more exist when the contemplations of the mind are not directed to their objects, than the emotion of beauty from the scenes of external nature can be felt when the eyes are closed in darkness. Not less absurd would it be, to expect those to exercise Christian faith, and repentance, and humility, who have no adequate conceptions of God, and Christ, and of the relations subsisting between him and us, than to expect one who has always been blind, to conceive the wonders of the summer landscape or describe the beauties of the rainbow. But, while the appropriate objects of religious feeling are thus to be contemplated, it is also necessary, in order that this feeling may possess its proper degree of intensity, that our intellectual views of those objects, should be clear and discriminating. The mind, upon whose perceptions the existence of God has but just dawned, can feel but a small degree of emotion towards him, while he, who like Gabriel, has for a thousand ages been searching amid the depths of his perfections, will burn with all the intensity of a seraph's love. One important cause then, of the coldness and apathy in religion, which render revivals necessary in the economy and progress of the Church, is ignorance of religious truth, and blindness or inattention to the proper objects of religious emotion; and Christians are never revived, unless they rise above those influences which occasion this ignorance and blindness.

It may hence be seen, why it is that the Holy Spirit, imparted to the

disciples of Christ, results in a revival of their languishing graces. For it is his office,—as declared by the Savior himself—to teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance. Under his influence, they acquire clear, and comprehensive, and consistent views of the great scheme of divine truth. Their minds are recalled to the proper objects of religious pursuit and contemplation. A new impulse is given to those emotions which belong to them as the disciples of Christ and the servants of God. They are made to look back with shame upon the ways in which they have been wandering; while, with mourning and rending of heart, they contemplate the guilty part which they have been acting. Their repentance is thus renewed, and their humility deepened and rendered more abasing. Their faith becomes truly the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Their love is strengthened, until it affords convincing evidence of a radical change in the temper and disposition of their hearts, and lays a foundation for that hope which is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast. That truly is a revival, which thus at once gives life and strength to the graces of the Christian character; and the rains and the sunshine of heaven are not more grateful to the earth in the opening of spring, than are the light of God's countenance, and the dews of heavenly grace, upon souls that have thus been recovered from the frosts of a spiritual winter.

But, when Christians have been thus revived in their own feelings, like the Psalmist as represented in our text, they always become mindful of those who are living in sin. The same spirit which, by enlivening their Christian graces, qualifies them to teach transgressors the ways of God, also makes them willing, by untiring diligence in the active and public duties of the Christian life, to labor for their salvation. The religion of Jesus Christ is neither exclusive nor passive in its character. When, therefore, the Spirit moves upon the hearts of Christians, the effects of his agency will always be seen in works which illustrate and commend the gospel to others—works done in the face of day—open and palpable to the inspection of men; and it is thus, by the impressive teachings of Christian example, that sinners are instructed in the ways of God; and, by a light which never deceives, are led on until they embrace the truth, and become joyful partakers in the blessings of salvation. When, in the lively exercise of Christian graces, and the faithful performance of Christian duties, the disciples of Christ thus collectively arise, and stand forth to the view of others, most strikingly do they realize the language of their divine Master, when he represents them under the similitude of a city set upon a hill. Its spires pierce the heavens its foundations are the everlasting rock, and upon its walls and palaces there is a beauty and a goodliness which attract the gaze and draw the steps of those who are wandering in darkness and in sin. The conversion of men once indifferent to religion, and who appear before never to have regarded it as a subject involving their own interest and duty, is hence the grand characteristic of every genuine revival of religion. It is that outward

manifestation of the Spirit's work, which affords visible proof of his presence—causing it to be seen and felt that the power of God is upon the hearts of men—wooing some by subduing tenderness, and urging others by overwhelming terrors to the ark of safety. Thus it is that often multitudes are at once roused from the lethargy of spiritual death, and while they awake to spiritual life, are made to rise in their aims and feelings to the true dignity of rational and immortal beings. The work of a new creation is carried on in their hearts, and the splendors of a new world unfolded to their perceptions, and they are made henceforth to labor not for themselves but for God, and to live not for time but for eternity.

II. In the second place, let it be remarked, in view of the present subject, that it suggests a reason for the prominence given in the word of God to the doctrine of divine influence. It is upon this influence that the salvation of a perishing world is dependent. Not, indeed, that without it men are devoid of the natural power of complying with the requisitions of the Gospel; and we deem that a gross perversion of the doctrine of divine influence, which represents it as the sole basis of the sinner's obligation. The necessity of the Spirit's agency exists rather in the fact, that so corrupting has been the influence of sin upon the hearts of men, that they need, by divine power, to be quickened to their duty. This is a necessity strictly moral in its nature, and yet it is one so real and absolute, that unless the energies of the divine Spirit are exerted, men will inevitably perish in their sins. The Scriptures accordingly teach us that it is by the Holy Spirit that men are made the subjects of that new birth, without which they cannot be prepared for the kingdom of heaven—by the Holy Spirit, that the work of sanctification is carried on in their hearts—by the Holy Spirit, too, that they are made to persevere in the Christian course, until at length, victorious over every spiritual enemy, they are brought to the day of their final redemption. It is thus, by divine agency, that the foundation, as well as the topmost stone, is laid in the temple of salvation. God takes compassion upon his creatures, in the waywardness and backwardness of their sluggish feelings and purposes—working within them both to will and to do, in order that they may be constrained to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. He looks upon them in their fallen condition, and prompts his own children to proclaim unto them the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. He sees how wedded they are to the world, and therefore gives them the aids of his Spirit in breaking away from its fascinations. He knows their weakness when they have first entered upon his service, and sustains their tottering steps as they climb the upward course. He knows their temptations, and gives them success in their conflicts with their spiritual enemies, and at last crowns them with the garlands of victory at his own right hand. True, therefore, as it doubtless is, that men are themselves active in the work of their own salvation—while they also give occasion to the activity of others in their behalf, yet is it also true, that to God alone belongs the glory of its successful accomplishment;

and it is but a simple statement of the facts connected with their salvation which he makes, when he represents his own agency as concerned, first and last, in achieving their redemption.

III. Let it also be remarked, as a truth naturally suggested by this subject, that the disciples of Christ often mistake the proper mode of rendering themselves successful and efficient laborers in the service of God. They do this, when they enter upon his service, without any distinct recognision of their dependence upon him for the success of their labors. And how often do they thus appear to forget what God has taught in so many forms, that even the zeal of Paul, and the eloquence of Apollos, could avail nothing, except by his own attending and crowning blessing? As if in their own unassisted strength, they could successfully cope with the enemies of truth and salvation, they are not always sufficiently careful, to gird themselves in that celestial armor which God only can give to his children. By their own wisdom, and with the strength of their own unassisted arms, they would achieve victories in their Master's service, and they therefore go forth to their spiritual conflicts, without seeking the aids of that Spirit whose office it is to give success to their efforts. It was not thus with the Apostle. For it was only through Christ strengthening him, that he felt assured that he could do all things. It was not thus with the Psalmist. For in order that he might successfully teach transgressors the ways of God, and prove instrumental in their conversion, he felt that he must be upheld by the Holy Spirit.

It is thus a fact—and one, too, worthy of being noticed in Christian experience—that the men whose minds have been most deeply imbued with the Holy Spirit, have also been most deeply impressed with the truth of their own absolute dependence upon his influences. Let it also be noticed, as not less worthy of remark, that such men have been the most abundant and untiring in their personal labors and sacrifices in their Master's service. It is so with all who have proper views of their dependence upon God. The conviction of this dependence awakens them to greater activity and devotion in doing his will. If God cheers them with the light of his countenance they know they shall not despond. If he upholds them by his free Spirit they know they shall not fall.

IV. In conclusion let it be remarked, that the presence of God's Spirit with his people is not only at all times most desirable, but most earnestly to be sought in prayer. The effects of this presence, when enjoyed, have already been brought into view. Is it not desirable that Christians should be in the lively exercise of those graces which properly belong to them as the disciples of Christ? What can be more desirable, than that they should possess that united spirit of supplication and action which lead them at once to pray, and to labor for the salvation of men? And that, too, which God hath taught us to expect as the result of all this—the conversion and restoration to his favor of those who come within the sphere of their influence—is it not an object on which the intense and burning desires of their hearts should be fixed? If for no other reason, should they not for this, strive and pray that they may be made richly to partake in the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

But in itself considered, and aside from the blessed effects to which we have referred—what can be conceived of more to be desired, than that God should take up his abode in the hearts of his children? If there were no sinners in the world to be converted—if there were none capable of being benefitted by their example, or affected by their prayers and labors, with what blessing could they desire to be blessed, compared with that of being visited with the gracious presence of the Most High?

THE WORTH AND THE CARE OF THE SOUL.

What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.—MARK, vii., 36.

"My Hearers—In the following remarks, I shall adopt the language of direct and personal address. I suppose you to be convinced by every day's observation, that your continuance in this world must very soon terminate. You believe in the ennobling doctrine of the soul's immortality, and of the continued expansion of its capacities of enjoying or suffering throughout its endless existence. You believe in eternal rewards and punishments; and you believe that the soul's future destiny will depend, not upon the wealth here amassed, the pleasure here enjoyed, or the knowledge here acquired; but upon the moral character *here* formed, and the spiritual life *here* begun. With this belief, you are confident that you have not formed that moral character, or commenced that spiritual life, which alone can fit you for eternal happiness. If such be your belief, and such your condition, I ask you to read what follows, as if it were addressed directly to yourself alone.

1. What, then, is the worth of the soul? How shall it be measured? How shall it be conceived? With what shall it be compared? Its immortality and its ever-expanding capacities are the elements on which its value depends. Let one immortal soul enjoy forever any definite and continued degree of happiness, however small—it is clear that the sum of its enjoyment, through the whole of its eternal existence, would exceed the sum of happiness that could be enjoyed in this world, by all the myriads of men that have ever inhabited it, or by the eight hundred millions that now inhabit it. Nay, the excess would be beyond all computation. Add, now, that the soul will enjoy not a *very small* continuance of happiness, but an inconceivably great, ever-enlarging and absolutely unbounded measure of felicity, going on, increasing with its expanding capacities, in a geometrical ratio, through the interminable ages of its immortality,—and who will attempt to draw the comparison between the sum of that one soul's happiness and the sum of all the worldly felicity of all the world's inhabitants, from its creation to the present time? Well might it be asked, "What will it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

My Hearers, do you go about, from day to day, conscious that there

is in you a spirit of inestimable value? And yet there is. Such a soul is committed to your care, and for its destiny you are accountable. And how stands that account? I appeal to your conscience. If you are assured that your soul is safe, I have no more to say. But if conscience tells you there is something wrong—if there comes over you, in your solitary meditation, some fearful foreboding of future wrath—if you know that you have not loved the Lord your God with all your capacities of loving, or served him with all your capacities of serving, and that, for the violation of this first and great commandment, you are exposed to the penalty of eternal death,—do not refuse to give attention to this business of the soul's salvation, until it shall be forever too late. Inestimably precious as the soul is, it may be lost, and lost without remedy! Will you incur that loss?

II. Consider whether you have a clear conception of the value of the soul. It is easy to acknowledge its *infinite* worth, without having any distinct idea of it at all. The interests of your single soul are, in truth, of more moment than the worldly interests of all the *nations* of the earth, put together. They are not only of more moment, in their relation to *you*, but even in themselves considered. The humblest and weakest Christian, that has secured the safety of his soul, and "fought the good fight of faith," has accomplished a nobler, sublimer, more momentous work, than all the achievements of all the intellectual giants, military heroes, and political statesmen, that have ever rendered their names illustrious. The revolution that must be effected for the soul's emancipation, calls for more intense interest, and more intense action, than the greatest political revolution. The moral struggle you are conscious of, in your own breast, is to decide a question, bigger with momentous consequences than the vital interests of the greatest nation on the globe. In being invested with the care of your soul, you are invested with a higher trust, and placed under a more overwhelming responsibility, than could arise from being made the ruler and arbiter of all the nations of the earth. Do you believe it?

III. Suppose you were made the chief magistrate of your country, with uncontrolled and unlimited powers to make its laws, judge of their infraction, and see to their execution—to direct all the national concerns, and secure the public tranquillity and happiness—to decide every question—to reconcile the jarring interests of Commerce, Manufactures and Agriculture,—in a word, to manage all its public concerns, both domestic and foreign;—would you not feel yourself almost overwhelmed by the responsibilities incident to such a task?

IV. Suppose, again, that the interests of all the nations of the earth were committed to your care, so that on your plans and management should depend the public condition, the public welfare and happiness of them all. And suppose, in addition to this, that, if it were possible, the social, domestic, and individual happiness of all the millions of this earth's inhabitants were made entirely and directly dependent upon you, so long as you should remain in the world;—would you not be crushed under the insupportable burthen? Add, now, the care of the temporal welfare of another world just like this—a third—a fourth—

hundreds—thousands—yes, millions of such worlds; and even then, all the weight of responsibility that would rest upon and would bear no comparison with that, under which you are now living. You have, under your care, a soul, whose eternal destiny depends upon you—a destiny that plainly and undeniably involves a greater amount of weal or woe, than could fall to the lot of all the inhabitants of millions of worlds like this, in the short space of your present life.

But perhaps you may say, that the chance of handling so complicated a machine as the political government of the world, would involve a much greater number of particulars, and a much greater amount of labor, than could be required for the care of a single soul. But, think you, that to make rules by which you may be guided in all the changing scenes and involved circumstances of life—faithfully to apply, and unhesitatingly to execute those rules—to deny the craving appetites—to direct the wayward desires—to restrain the headlong passions—to fix the wandering affections—to resist, daily and hourly, temptations on the right hand and on the left—to keep yourself perfectly unspotted from the world—to wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers—all the while to be assiduously engaged in active benevolence, and in mental and moral improvement, without yielding to the enticements, either of pleasure or of indolence;—think you, that this is not a task involving many particulars, and demanding labor?

Be urged to an immediate attention to the concerns of your soul—not only by the happiness that is to be gained, but by the misery that is to be avoided. Remember, that the soul's capability of misery is equal to its capability of happiness—that you have the testimony of God, that it is now exposed to that misery, and unless you take a determined and desperate effort, it is ruined forever. Its immortality will be an *eternal death;—an eternal death!* Who can fathom the full significancy of those awful words? *Eternity of death!*—Reader, are you exposed to such a destiny? Think of it. If you are—"be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer."

If you neglect the interests of your soul, there is coming a day of judgment, when you will be exposed, in the intensest light which Omniscience can throw upon you, to the gaze of an assembled universe, as a betrayer of a most sacred trust. That day of judgment, when it comes, will be a reality, and the burning shame of that exposure, will be a reality,—and that eternal death, too, will be a reality, which will assuredly come.

It will not avail you, to plead that you never made any promise to attend to the care of your soul. You are accountable, nevertheless, and your accountability, you cannot avoid—you cannot decline it—you cannot run from it—you cannot suspend it, or rid yourself of it a single moment. It is inseparable from your nature, a part of your very being. It clings to you, and will forever cling to you. Your Maker waits with you, that you will do your duty. He requires it of you now. The vows of the expressed Christian are nothing more than an expression of his determination to perform what it was his duty to perform before. *His* duty is *yours*. Will you do it?"

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 11. Vol. XVI.) NOVEMBER, 1842. (Whole No. 191.

SERMON CCCXXXV.

BY WILLIAM R. DE WITT,

HARRISBURG, PA.

Preached in Norwich, Conn., September 13, 1842, before the A. B. C. F. Miss.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST THE MOTIVE OF MISSIONARY EFFORT.

"The love of Christ constraineth us."—II. COR., v. 14.

It is only when men feel deeply, that they act with energy. The mere calm intellectual contemplation of an object will avail but little, in calling forth the energies of the soul in untiring action to secure its accomplishment. That object must seize hold upon the heart. It must break up its deep fountains of feeling, and bring the mind under the influence of its high and powerful excitement. Under such an impulse, men have gone forward in the successful prosecution of enterprises, which, to other minds, have appeared embarrassed with difficulties, and encumbered with dangers, that would have rendered every attempt at their accomplishment the effect of childish folly or mad presumption. Superior eminence in any of the pursuits of life has usually been the result of an engrossing passion for that pursuit. No great moral or political revolution was ever achieved, without first awakening an enthusiastic devotion in its behalf.

Though this principle of our nature has been perverted by depravity, and men, under the strong impulse of unholy feeling, have been borne onward, with indomitable energy, in the work of death; yet, in itself, the feature is god-like. Its prototype is found in him, who is the perfection of excellence. It was not the mere calm intellectual contemplation of our apostasy and consequent ruin, that led to the achievement of man's redemption. That achievement, in which has been made the fullest and clearest development of uncreated excellence, which has waked up the strains of the everlasting song, and which will yet fill God's holy kingdom with perfect and eternal blessedness, is the fruit of the throes of infinite love. It is to the strong impulse of this holy affection, that we owe the gift of God's eternal Son; that we are indebted for those scenes of thrilling interest through which he passed during his voluntary exile from Heaven, and for that dark and mighty, though ultimately triumphant conflict, in Gethsemane and on Calvary. It is incarnate love enthroned in Heaven, that now holds the sceptre of

universal dominion; and with an eye that never sleeps, and an arm that never wearies, is carrying forward to their consummation, the purposes of infinite benevolence. This same affection, with a congruity so characteristic of God, he has made not only the brightest ornament of Christian character, but the impulsive motive to every duty required of us, as his followers. In the lives of the apostles and primitive Christians, we are furnished with the best examples of its power. The love of Christ constrained them.

In the context, the apostle is justifying the conduct of himself, and his fellow laborers, against the cavils of false and mistaken brethren, in the church at Corinth. They had represented their zeal as fanaticism, as the indication of a monomania, that rendered them incompetent to instruct and govern the Church of God, in those periods of peril. The apostle seeks to correct the impressions made by these representations, by stating the principles and the motives that influenced their conduct. Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause; for the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge; that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again. It is, we conceive, of little importance, whether we understand the apostle as referring to the love of Christ for us, or our love to Christ. If the former, it only becomes a motive to devoted effort in his cause, by exciting in our hearts a reciprocal affection. If the latter, (which we think the apostle intended when he penned this passage), it is ever the effect of Christ's love for us.

This affection, my brethren, is the fruit of the Spirit of God; and springs from a spiritual apprehension of the transcendant glory of the Redeemer's person; and from a deep sense of individual obligation to Him, for his unmerited mercy. It is an affection which seeks its own nourishment, and grows strong and permanent, by daily meditations on the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary; and by daily communion with its object at a throne of grace. Such was the affection which reigned in the hearts and governed the lives of the primitive disciples of our Lord; which bore them onward through trials and persecutions, and led them to count not even their lives dear, in their efforts to bring the world under the holy and peaceful dominion of the Son of God. It was the love of Christ transfusing its purity through their characters, and breathing its sweetness in all their actions, that gave them, under God, their efficiency, and crowned their labors with such abundant success.

It will not then, I trust, be deemed inappropriate to the present occasion, to illustrate in a few particulars, the adaptation of this affection to our holy vocation, especially as called by the providence and the grace of God, to sustain an important agency in sending the Gospel of Christ, as the richest boon of Heaven, to every creature.

I. In the prosecution of this object, I remark in the first place,—that the love of Christ is an *elevating* affection.

The missionary enterprise associates mankind, universally, with the destinies of an immortal existence. The results at which it aims lie above and beyond this world, and reach onward through the ages of eternity. It does, indeed, effect the improvement of their condition in this life. But this is only an incidental good. The great, the ultimate object is, to bring them under an influence from Heaven, that will enlighten and purify their souls, restore them to the knowledge and friendship of God, and prepare them for a deathless existence beyond the grave. This is an object, in which most men feel no interest—for which the world at large has no sympathy. It is as far above the designs of its greatest philanthropists, as the heavens are above the earth; and it can be properly appreciated and successfully prosecuted by those alone, whose views and purposes and feelings have undergone a corresponding elevation. Such an elevation, my brethren, the love of Christ secures, by bringing us into intimate communion with Himself; by destroying, as far as it prevails, every low and selfish purpose; and by identifying our very being with his interests and with his glory.

The tendency of ardent affection is to mould, insensibly, the character to the image of the object loved. It seeks its own gratification in the intimacy of friendship, and dwells with delight on those attributes which have called it into exercise, until the mind yields to their impression. Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, even from glory to glory. While this affection produces this conformity to the image of Christ, it destroys, as far as it prevails, every selfish purpose, and makes us one with him. It identifies our interests with his interests, our glory with his glory. It elevates the thoughts and purposes of the mind above the current of this world's influences, and associates them with the great objects of the mediatorial reign;—with the scenes and the destinies of eternity, in which that reign will be consummated.

Brethren, the relations and the interests of time will ere long terminate for ever. The fashion of this world is passing away; and soon the last ray of its glory will rest upon the bosom of that dark cloud, which comes charged with its final doom. But earth has interests connected with the councils of an eternity that is passed, and with the ages of an eternity to come. Over the ruins of our apostasy, the thoughts of the Son of God lingered, before the foundations of the world were laid, or the heavens were stretched abroad as a curtain. Even then, in anticipation of achieving the redemption of man, he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. Immediately on the fall of man he interposed his mediation to arrest the progress of the curse, and to bring the apostate race under a dispensation of mercy, which, in its final consummation, will realize all that infinite benevolence can desire. From that period he has gone forward in the prosecution of his plans. For this the world has been upheld in existence. Empires have risen and fallen. Nations have dashed against nations. The earth has been one scene of wild misrule. But over

this scene the Son of God has presided, ordering and directing all with unerring skill, for the attainment of his own ends. It was not until he had made, by his sacrifice on the cross, an expiation for sin, and thus laid a sure foundation for his eternal kingdom, that his regal dignity was formally assumed and publicly announced. Then, having spoiled principalities and powers, he visibly ascended, in his glorified humanity, to his throne in Heaven. There he now reigns, and will reign, until he has put all enemies under his feet; until he has extended his mild and peaceful sceptre over a redeemed and subjugated world, and accomplished the purposes of infinite benevolence by gathering into his eternal kingdom the multitudes of the saved.

The love of Christ, my brethren, elevates the soul to communion with him in the vast designs of his mediation. He, in whose heart it predominates, is absorbed in the greatness and glory of the achievement. To him it is not less real than sublime. He sees around him the agencies that are now in active operation for its accomplishment, and he anticipates the grandeur of its consummation with unhesitating certainty. The relations and the interests of time are lost sight of, and he regards it as his highest honor to be associated with Christ, though in toil, in suffering, and in reproach, in carrying forward his designs. Such is the elevated spirit of our holy enterprise. Such was the spirit of the Apostles and primitive disciples of our Lord. No one can read their lives without admiring their abstraction from the secular interests that surrounded them, and the vivid impressions of eternal realities under which they lived. Though in the world, they were not of the world. They lived above the current of its influences. They gazed upon the visions of eternity. At Jerusalem, at Athens, or at Rome, surrounded by the imposing ceremonies of their ancient faith, by the proudest monuments of art, by academic groves, or by the splendors of the eternal city, they lost sight of all in the absorbing anticipations of their Redeemer's glory, when he should come to gather into his kingdom the purchase of his blood, and seal up the doom of the lost. Regardless of reproach and toil, they prayed and wept, and entreated men to fly from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life, as though they were listening to hear the sound of the last trumpet, the wailing of the lost, and the triumphant shout of the glorified. Such was the spirit of faith and love that glowed in their bosoms, that elevated them above the world, and bore them on in the duties of their high calling. In proportion as the Church has possessed this spirit, has she enjoyed the blessings of her exalted head, and been honored with success in her efforts to extend his kingdom. May this spirit be ours, brethren, in its largest measure, that we may be prepared to go forward to the achievement of that glorious destiny, to which God is now calling His Church.

II. In the second place, the love of Christ is admirably adapted to the peculiar exigencies of the missionary enterprise, as it is not only an elevating, but also a *self-sacrificing* affection.

It is the nature of love to seek its highest gratification in the happi-

ness of its object. Love lives in the enjoyments it bestows. This is the element of its existence. It delights in occasions of manifesting its strength by the extent of its sacrifices in promoting the good of those that are loved. The eye, brethren, can linger upon nothing more beautiful than the manifestation of this affection. The heart can be subjected to no influence richer in the purest enjoyment. The brightest emanations of deity ever contemplated by created minds, are the out-goings of this affection toward our guilty race, by our Lord Jesus Christ. He loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for our sins. The gift was the most costly that could be bestowed. The treasures of the universe are nothing in comparison with it. To comprehend its magnitude we must comprehend the nature and the resources of the Godhead—for its fulness dwells in him; we must comprehend the infinite delight of his own bosom as he surveyed, from his exalted throne, myriads of holy beings to whom his power had given existence, brightening and exulting in the sunshine of his complacency, pouring forth the song of ecstasy in his praise, and bowing down in solemn adoration at his footstool; and from these celestial heights we must descend through all those stages of deep humiliation, and those scenes of unparalleled sufferings through which he passed, until, on the cross, he exclaimed, it is finished, and bowed his head in death. Though there were seasons when pressed down under his extreme agony, he prayed that if it were possible, the cup of bitterness might pass from him, he knew from the beginning what he must endure. He knew that poverty, toil, reproach, and persecution, would be his constant attendants; that upon him would be poured the fury of the powers of darkness, and the wrath of offended heaven; that, smitten, afflicted, and forsaken of God, he must die in untold agonies on the accursed tree. Yet, such was the strength and devotedness of his love that he willingly came. He delighted to enter upon his work. He pressed forward with holy impatience to the darkest hour of his agony, and bared his own bosom to the sword of eternal justice, that man might be saved. Such, my brethren, is the love of Christ; the grand example, the exalted pattern, after which God will mould, in eternal assimilation to himself, the subjects of his holy kingdom. The minds of the apostles were absorbed in admiration of this love. In their solitary musings it was the subject of their devout meditations. It was the theme, the burthen of their public ministrations. It woke up in their bosoms a reciprocal affection, that sought its highest gratification in pleasing Christ; and rejoiced in occasions of manifesting its strength and devotedness by the greatness of the sacrifice made in behalf of his cause. For Christ they forsook all. They cheerfully suffered the loss of earthly friendships, riches, and honors; and endured poverty, reproach, sufferings and death itself. Nay, they gloried in tribulation, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. It was the impulsive influence of this self-sacrificing affection that bore them onward from land to land, and from shore to shore, amid perils the most imminent, though the Holy

Ghost bore them witness that bonds and afflictions awaited them wherever they went. But none of these things moved them. No regard for their own personal safety, nor the solicitations of weeping friends, restrained them from pressing forward into thickest dangers where duty called them. They counted not their lives dear unto themselves, that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry they had received from the Lord Jesus.

Brethren, with this spirit of self-devotedness must the Church be deeply embued before she will be prepared to discharge her solemn obligations to her ascended Lord. We cannot do what God requires from us in the conversion of the world, abiding in our sealed houses, enjoying the pleasures and luxuries of wealth and refinement. Nor will we approximate to the measure of our responsibility, by offering up a few prayers for the success of missions, and giving a few dollars of the increase of our substance to aid in sustaining them. The work indeed is the Lord's, and cursed is the man who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the living God. But now, as ever, the agencies by which he will accomplish this work, he has entrusted to his Church, and upon her has he imposed the solemn responsibility of employing them, in humble dependence on his blessing. Who, as he surveys the moral condition of the world in the light of God's word—of his promises and commands, and contrasts with it the efforts that have been, or are now making to reclaim it from its guilt and degradation, is not painfully convinced, that the Church, as yet, is far from having any adequate views of the extent of her obligations, or possessing, in any adequate measure, the spirit of her high vocation? If, with her numbers, her wealth, her political and social influence, and the facilities she now enjoys for employing the means ordained of God for the conversion of the world, the Church possessed the same spirit of self-sacrificing devotion to the cause of her Redeemer, which distinguished her primitive members, how soon would she realize the brightest visions of prophecy respecting her future glory! Under the influence of this spirit, ambition and pride and the love of worldly ease and pleasure would disappear. Wealth, now held with a miser's grasp, would be cheerfully consecrated to God. Talent and learning, now devoted to vain speculations in philosophy, and to the bitterness of unhallowed controversy, would be devoted to the affectionate and earnest preaching of the gospel, in the fulness of its blessings. Thousands and tens of thousands of devoted youth would come from the soul-subduing contemplations of the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, with hearts filled with the love of Christ, ready to part with all for his name's sake; to endure toil, suffering, and death itself, if need be, to make known the provisions of eternal love to a perishing world. Then, from united and believing hearts, importunate supplication would continually ascend to the throne of God for the interposition of his almighty arm, and the communications of his Holy Spirit. That arm would then be made bare for salvation, and that Spirit poured out from on high; and the earth would soon be filled with the knowledge and the glory of the Lord.

III. In the third place, another attribute of this affection which commends it, as peculiarly adapted to the missionary enterprise, is, that in its greatest strength, and to whatever sacrifice it prompts, it is a *reasonable* affection.

Though, as has been said, it is only when we feel deeply that we act with energy, yet in order to secure the permanency of such action, our feelings must be sustained by a sound judgment, and meet with an approving response from an enlightened conscience. These are their appointed arbiters; and there are seasons of frequent occurrence in every man's life, however borne forward by strong emotion, when they will vindicate their high prerogatives and sit in judgment on the character of those affections, which excite and control their actions. Unless these affections meet with their decided sanction, there will be misgivings that will cool their fervor, repress their energy, and induce that hesitancy which must ever be fatal to the accomplishment of results embarrassed with difficulties.

The Christian, and especially the Christian missionary, can have none of the excitements to effort, which the world administers to its votaries. To him it is of the utmost importance, that the motives which induce him to enter upon his self-denying, and often perilous career, should be sustained in those seasons of retirement, when, thrown back on his own sober reflections, they undergo the scrutiny of a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience.

The love of power and the prospect of earthly renown, feed the fires of unhallowed ambition, and nerve the soul with energy in the prosecution of difficult and dangerous enterprises. The field of battle is the field of earthly glory. There, amid the perils of the conflict, are displayed those energies of mind, which, with stern composure, control the fury and direct the storm of war; and the proud and haughty bearing of the victor shows that he is conscious of the world's admiration, though he has crushed beneath his feet every sentiment of justice, and every feeling of humanity. But the Christian toils in obscurity. He wastes his energies in unremitted effort to do good, without attracting the notice of the world. He tears himself from home, from kindred, from the sympathies and the privileges of Christian society; goes to unfriendly climes, seeks an abode among the dark and degraded heathen; and, exposed to the most imminent dangers, he toils, and suffers, and dies, that he may bring to them the knowledge of salvation, and direct them in the way of life. But no trumpet heralds his fame. No garlands are wreathed to deck his brow. No festive board is spread as the tribute of admiration for his self-denying deeds of beneficence. Reproach instead of honor, denunciation as a madman or a fool, are the only rewards bestowed by an ungodly and a misjudging world. Even from the bosom of the Church, where he had a right to look for that sympathy and that encouragement which are his sweetest earthly solace, he sometimes meets with a repulsive apathy, far worse than direct opposition. Thus is he thrown for support on his own deep and sober conviction of the reasonableness of the motive by which he has been actuated,

and his confidence of its approval at the bar of God. This conviction, and this confidence, brethren, will not fail to yield their support, if the love of Christ has been the constraining motive. In the hour of its greatest trial, and under the severest scrutiny, it will receive the sanction of reason, and meet with the approving response of conscience. The more calmly the Christian weighs the claims of his Savior, the deeper will be the conviction of his obligation, and the more reasonable will appear that affection which constrains him to withhold nothing, but cheerfully to consecrate his all to his blessed service. In those seasons of sober reflection, it is not what is *given*, but what is *withheld* that troubles an enlightened conscience. To be entirely relieved from perplexing embarrassments, and fears, and doubts; to enjoy the fulness of that liberty with which Christ blesses his people, the heart must let go its hold on everything else, and cling to him in the strength of its love. Then, the conflict between the convictions of duty and the power of selfishness and unbelief, ceases; and there is peace, quietness, and assurance for ever. Never was there a cup of cold water given, from love to him, without its reward: and the greater the sacrifice we make, the more will his consolations abound in the soul. There is no man, that has left house, or parent, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this life, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

With what striking and beautiful illustrations of this truth are we furnished in the biographies of our missionaries. Sometimes, brethren, when I have thought of them as far off, surrounded only by the darkness and degradations of heathenism, suffering every privation, toiling from year to year under every outward discouragement, with no friendly voice to animate them, and no sympathising bosom on which to repose their aching heads in the hour of despondency and gloom;—when I have thought of the delicate, the refined, the enlightened female missionary—the dew of her youth wasted in ceaseless anxieties and unremitted toil;—when I have followed her in my imagination, to some secluded spot to which she is wont to retire, perhaps in the stillness of the evening hour, to think of her home, and to recall the looks and the affections of those from whom she is separated until they meet beyond the vale of death, where parting is unknown; and when I have there witnessed the deep convulsive throes of her heart, while the tears chase each other over her pale and care-worn cheeks;—I have said in my haste, it is *too much*. *Can, does* God require it? But when I have read of their love for their work, and how their consolations abounded in the midst of their trials;—when I have read of their holy enjoyment in God, of their sweet peace of mind, of their ardent aspirations after heaven, as faith unfolded to their enraptured vision the brightness of its glory;—when I have read of their composed, of their peaceful and triumphant deaths, and thought of the unfading brilliancy of that crown which shall encircle their brows; I have said—it is *not* a vain thing to serve the Lord:—whatever sacrifices it involves, its rewards are infinitely preferable to earth's highest honors and purest pleasures.

IV. In the fourth place, the love of Christ is an affection peculiarly adapted to the exigencies of the missionary enterprise, as it is the bond of union among the followers of the Redeemer, and thus prepares them for efficient co-operation in the advancement of his kingdom.

Union to Christ, and their participation in common, of one spirit from him as their living head, is the only firm and enduring bond of union among his people. To those, thus united to Christ, he is the common foundation on which they all rest, as lively stones, in one spiritual temple. He is the vine to whom all adhere as branches, receiving from Him those vital influences, by which they live, and grow, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness. He is the common object of their faith, their hope and their love. In his cause centres all their interest, and his glory is the end at which they all aim. The one spirit they receive from Christ is pre-eminently the spirit of holy love. It uproots as far as it prevails the pride and selfishness of the human heart. It abolishes private and separate interests, and unites them in cheerful and self-denying efforts to advance the kingdom of their common Savior.

The manifestation of this spirit is among the means ordained of God, to convince men of the divinity of the gospel. It illustrates more than anything visible, its power over the otherwise unconquerable dominion of human depravity; and it demonstrates its heavenly origin by bringing the victims of this depravity from the collisions and strifes of pride, and selfishness, and lust, into one peaceful brotherhood of holy love.

How intensely was the heart of Christ fixed on this union among his people! It was the burden of his petition, in his last prayer for his Church. "Neither," says he, "pray I for these alone, but those also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me."

Can we hope, brethren, for the conversion of the world to God, while the Christian Church presents the spectacle it now does;—organized into various sects, whose separate interests, too often advanced by artifice and slander, are guarded with sleepless vigilance?—While the professed friends of Jesus, instead of combining their efforts to advance the common cause, are marshalling under the banners of party rivalship, and exhausting their strength by mutual hostilities?

At the close of the last century, when Christians first began to unite their efforts for advancing the kingdom of their Redeemer, it seemed to some, in the ardor of Christian hope, as the very dawn of the millenium. "Astonishing spectacle!" said one at that time, "the spell of party is broken; the antipathies of the cradle expire; the strife of ages ceases; and a sweeter harmony of heart and of measures is produced in an hour, than has been granted to the entreaties, the labors, and the prayers of the best men for centuries."* Oh, that this union, so auspi-

* Ser. of Rev. J. M. Mason, preached 1797, before the New York Miss. Society.

ciously commenced, had been permitted to go on until consummated in that blessed result for which the Savior wept and prayed and died! But, alas! after the expiration of nearly half a century, what do we witness, in portions at least, of the Church of Christ? The spell of party and the antipathies of the cradle are revived; the strife of ages is renewed; and the fond anticipations of pious hope are blasted by the bitter animosities and strifes that have been engendered by the ambitious and the violent, who, regardless of the prayer of the Redeemer, have torn asunder the cords of Christian union, and given occasion to the common enemy to glory over the wasted and ruined heritage of God.

Among the fallacies which the arch-deceiver has imposed upon the minds of some, in this divided and weakened condition of the Church, is the *one*, that separate and sectarian action will effect more for the conversion of the world, than the combined efforts of the consecrated host of God. It is unnecessary to suggest even an argument in confutation of a position so at variance with the whole genius and spirit of Christianity, with the dictates of sound discretion, and with the experience of ages. Is it too severe a judgment to affirm in regard to such an opinion, that it is the spirit of party, seeking its own justification by virtually repudiating the magnanimous spirit of Christian love?

There is, brethren, but one remedy for all these evils in the Church of God. It is the love of Christ shed abroad in the hearts of its members by the Holy Ghost given unto them. United to Christ in the bonds of this pure affection, we shall be united to each other. Individual and sectarian feelings and interests will all be merged into that love, which seeketh not her own, but the things of Jesus Christ. Then the prayer of the Redeemer will be answered; and one in affection, one in purpose, and one in effort, the living members of his spiritual body, his Church, will go forth in the spirit of might to accomplish the predicted glory of Zion.

V. In the fifth place, this affection is of the utmost importance in accomplishing the great object of our association, as it involves a spirit of holy dependence on Christ, and of earnest believing prayer for his blessing.

Love is a confiding affection. The Christian in whose heart the love of Christ glows, delights in reposing on the almighty arm of his Savior, and in seeking directly from Him the blessing he desires, and giving Him all the glory in their reception and enjoyment.

It is, my brethren, a question of great practical importance, whether, in this age of comparative zeal and benevolence for the spread of the gospel, there is cherished in the hearts of Christians, that deep sense of dependence on God, and that habit of holy, earnest, believing prayer in secret, which are essential to secure that blessing, without which all the efforts of the Church must be in vain. While there is a beautiful consistency and harmony, according to the economy of grace, between the spirit of unceasing and laborious activity in the cause of Christ, and the spirit of entire dependence on him, and earnest believing prayer;

yet it cannot be disguised, that, owing to the imperfection of Christian character, we need to watch constantly, lest, in the cultivation of the one, we overlook the other. The apostles united both. They gave themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Unceasing and self-sacrificing as were their labors, it was with them a practical truth, that pressed with all its weight upon their hearts, that whosoever planted, and whosoever watered, God must give the increase. They felt, that of themselves they could do nothing—that all the instrumentalities they employed, though mighty through God, to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan, and building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ, were feeble, were weakness itself without his co-operation. With what confidence, then, must they have reposed on the arm of their Almighty Savior, as they girded themselves for the conflict, and went forth to contend not merely against flesh and blood, not merely against the organized forms of evil on earth, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places. With what holy importunity must they have borne on their agonizing hearts, before a throne of grace, the cause of a world perishing in sin. They prayed without ceasing. They continued instant in prayer. They went from their knees to their work, and intermitted that work only to seek the blessing of God, their Redeemer, in prayer. This, unquestionably, was one principal cause of their success. They prayed like Jacob when he wrestled with the Angel of the Covenant, and would not let him go without the blessing. They prayed like Abraham when he plead for Sodom and prevailed with God.

The same spirit of earnest prayer was a striking characteristic of the reformers. The age of the Reformation was an age of mighty intercession with God. And the whole burden of prophecy intimates that the Church will be deeply imbued with this spirit as she enters upon her millenial glory. What can be accomplished, brethren, without the arm of the Almighty? and what can we not achieve if that arm be made bare for salvation? The results that have been already secured are the earnests of what he is willing to grant. When the people of God, reposing with unlimited and affectionate confidence on the arm of their Almighty Savior, and pressing His throne with their ceaseless supplications, go unitedly forward, in the spirit of self-devotement to the work of their high calling, how soon will they exclaim, in holy astonishment at the result of their own efforts, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?" "Then," says God, "thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and thou shalt be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee. The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."

Finally, brethren, the love of Christ is an affection adapted to the great objects of our association, as it is itself the essential element of successful effort.

"Knowledge is power," is the saying of one of the most gifted of mankind. But a greater than Bacon has taught, and demonstrated, too, that love is power. The author of our being has interwoven with

the very fibres of our existence a strong susceptibility to its influence. Depravity must, indeed, have wrought a fearful ruin in the soul, that is steeled against its impressions in every form. It may be doubted whether such a monster is permitted to live in this world, as yet the scene of moral probation. Before such a consummation takes place, the soul is removed to those dark regions where malignity reigns unrestrained, and despair, with raven wings, broods over its immortal destiny. Go where you will, among the most debased, the outcasts of mankind, and you will find, amid the ruins that sin has effected in their moral natures, there still lingers a chord responsive to the manifestations of goodness. Nay, where reason itself is dethroned, and the darkest images of horror haunt the mind, or maniac rage distorts the features, the love of kindness has subdued the soul to gentleness, and won the heart to confidence and gratitude. It was this that gave to Howard his power over the reckless and the violent. Beneath his look of benignity the heart of the hardened convict relented, and at his voice of kindness the dawn of hope gleamed over the sullen gloom of the desperate in wretchedness. What influence has wrought that wonderful, that almost miraculous reformation, among the inebriates of our land? Our statute books are crowded with penal enactments against the drunkard. Society frowned indignantly upon his vice. The respectable loathed his appearance, and turned him with disgust from their doors. Argument and expostulation were tried in vain, until the friends of temperance, wearied with their fruitless efforts, gave over the confirmed inebriate to a hopeless doom. But love interposed. She sought, with tears of pity, the poor degraded outcast in the dens of pollution and infamy. She took him from the loathsome gutter and addressed him with the voice of kindness. She whispered hope to his heart, inspired him with confidence, and thus redeemed him from his degradation and restored him to respectability and usefulness.

Amid the ruins of the fall, the susceptibility to the power of love remains in the human soul, to save it, by the grace of God, from utter abandonment, and bring it back again, under the dominion of holiness, that it may eventually be prepared for the purity and the bliss of heaven. It has not with more eloquence than truth been observed, that, "God, who knew what was in man, seems to have known that in his dark bosom there was but one solitary hold that he had on him, and that to reach it he must put on a look of graciousness, and tell us he had no pleasure in our death, and manifest toward us the longings of a bereaved parent, and even to humble himself into a suppliant in the cause of our return, and bid his messengers bear, through all their habitations, the tidings of his good will to the children of men.—And now that every barrier which lay across the path of acceptance is levelled by the power of Him who travailed in the greatness of his strength for us, is the voice of a friendly and beseeching God, lifted up without reserve in the hearing of us all; and this one mighty principle of attraction is brought to bear upon our natures, that might have remained sullen and unmoved under every other application."* And, brethren, with a congruity so

* Dr. Chalmers.

like God, he has entrusted the publication of his loving kindness not to angels' lips of burning eloquence, but to the children of depravity and wretchedness, whose hearts have been won and subdued and blessed by the power of this love, that from the fulness of their own experience they might testify of its truth and richness to their brethren in depravity and wretchedness. Then it is, when subdued and burdened with a sense of their personal obligation to their Savior, they go, as redeemed sinners, to speak of his infinite goodness, to commend him as the hope of the guilty and the wretched, and urge them with tears of tenderness and love to confide in his mercy;—then it is, that their words find their way to the hearts of their hearers, subdue them to penitence, warm them into love, excite them to confidence in God, and fill them with holy peace. And when the hearts of the ministers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ are bathed in the pure fountain of a Savior's love, when they live, and pray, and preach, and labor, under its constraining influences, it will not be long before, from the mount of God, they rejoice with joy unspeakable over a redeemed and regenerated world.

If these things be so, beloved brethren; if I have not unduly estimated the importance and adaptation of this holy affection to our high vocation—especially as called by the providence and grace of God—to sustain an important agency in sending the gospel to every creature, then it only remains that I urge you, not forgetting my own obligations, to cultivate this holy affection. How numerous and how solemn the motives that press upon us this duty! The claims of that Savior who loved us, and gave himself for us; the vows we have made before God and man; the condition of a perishing world; the signs of the times; the shortness of life; the approaching retributions of eternity, and the importance of being fully qualified to achieve, under God, the high destiny to which we are individually called—all, all urge us to cherish the love of Christ in our hearts, as the controlling motive of our lives, and to devote ourselves unceasingly to the advancement of his kingdom.

Brethren, there is one thought connected with this subject to which, I trust, the occasion will justify me in alluding. We are not left without the most delightful examples of the power of this sacred love to incite us to its cultivation: and the place where we are now assembled, on this return of our Anniversary, brings to our remembrance the names of many* who here imbibed this spirit, until, constrained by it, they tore themselves away from their weeping friends and kindred, to go and carry to the benighted heathen the tidings of salvation. There are few places where we could meet with so many hearts, connected by the most tender recollections, and the most solemn associations, with our holy enterprise. There are many here, honored of God, who have resigned the cherished objects of their fondest earthly love to the claims of Christ and the

* The city of Norwich and its immediate vicinity has furnished twenty-eight missionaries for the heathen.

heathen. Some of these are now in the field of labor, bearing with cheerfulness the burden and heat of the day; while others, having finished their work, have been called to their reward in Heaven. The very places consecrated by the prayers and tears of these devoted servants of God, where, constrained by a Savior's love, they first gave themselves to the cause of Missions, are full of interest. Around these places we could linger, musing on their bright example, until we caught a portion of their spirit, and were excited to emulate their devotedness.

But, Brethren, there are places and scenes of far deeper interest, that invite our attention. It is among the deep shades of Gethsemane, and at the foot of the cross on Calvary, that we must linger, and meditate, and pray. It is here, in the contemplation of the love of Christ for us—a love, the height, the depth, the length and the breadth of which, no finite mind can measure, that we must learn to estimate the extent of our obligations, and imbibe the spirit which will prepare us to act our parts in achieving the vast results of his mediatorial reign. Toils and sufferings, in the prosecution of our work, may be ours. We may not see what our eyes long to see, before our lips are sealed in death, and our bodies descend into the grave. But the kingdom of the Redeemer shall be triumphant. The diadem of the nations shall adorn his brow. At his feet shall bow a ransomed world; and in the day of his glory, among the myriads of the blessed as they ascend, with the shout of triumph, to the kingdom prepared for them from the foundations of the world, shall all appear who have here yielded their hearts to the constraining influences of his love.

SERMON CCCXXXVI.

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THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF THE YOUNG.

"And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."—II. TIMOTHY, III., 15.

THERE is probably no portion of the writings of the Apostle Paul, in which his character is exhibited to the attentive reader in a more interesting light, than in his letters to his youthful friends and fellow-labourers Titus and Timothy. In other epistles we perceive, indeed, and admire the peerless majesty of his mind, dilated and ennobled by the operations of the truth: the glow of his heart touched and purified by the influences of the Holy Ghost. In some we mark the surprising acuteness and force of his reasoning powers, and in others we are carried onward by the resistless flow of the richest and most impressive eloquence. We are subdued by his strength, captivated by his beauty, or awed by his sublimity; and are compelled to feel that our thoughts and sensibilities are under the control of a spirit of no ordinary mould.

But in his epistles to Titus and Timothy, he appears in circumstances somewhat different. He is writing, in all the freedom of confiding friendship, to individuals; and they the seals of his own ministry and the beloved companions of his privations and toils. They were, moreover, *young* disciples, who looked to him for counsel and instruction, and for whom he felt a strong solicitude that they should well acquit themselves of their holy charge. Accordingly, we here observe a new and rare assemblage of virtues. The mightiness of his intellect and the warmth of his affections so united, the separate features of each so admirably blended, the colors so richly mingled, as to present a portraiture the most lovely and attractive. Here is exhibited a friendship sincere and ardent, in which age allies itself with youth: yet is it age gracefully laying aside every appearance of severity or assertion of dignity, while it opens the stores of sanctified wisdom, and exhorts and counsels and encourages "with all long-suffering and gentleness." With

what ineffable tenderness does Paul the Aged, "now ready to be offered," address himself to Timothy, *his own son* in the faith? How strong must have been the tie that bound him to the youth of his prayers and hopes, and with whom he now entrusts the ministry of the faithful word, as he himself is about to retire from the scene? With what undissembled satisfaction does he "call to remembrance the unfeigned faith which dwelt in him," and which he might be almost said to have inherited? And with what solemn and affecting emphasis does he "charge him before God and the Lord Jesus Christ" to a holy consecration as a believer and to renewed devotion as a minister of the blessed gospel?

Timothy had enjoyed singular advantages for pious education. From childhood he had been diligently taught in "the Holy Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation." And the progress he had made in divine things, the faith, the love, the purity he displayed, the Apostle more than intimated to have been the sanctified effects of that early instruction and care he had received from his "grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice." The mature fruits had bountifully repaid their wise and prayerful culture.

From this pleasing example, recorded and perpetuated with Apostolic commendation, I design to gather a few remarks aiming to point out the importance of early inculcating a regard for the Bible and its truth upon the young: and the encouragement they have to persevere who are called in Providence to engage in this work. My remarks, as is expected on this occasion, will be directed more especially to parents and to teachers of Sabbath Schools.

I. In regard to the DUTY and importance of carefully imbuing the youthful mind with a proper estimate of the Holy Scriptures, various considerations arise to enforce it, if indeed on such a point any proof or reasonings be required or even admissible. Perhaps in this, as in a multitude of other cases, it is not so needful that truth and duty should be made plain by argument, as that it should be rendered impressive by repetition: and that our minds should be stirred up by way of remembrance. With this view, therefore, I would observe,

1. That the Scriptures are GOD'S WORD, presenting a peculiar claim from that fact as well as from the nature of their contents to the devout attention of all to whom they are addressed. They are "the Holy Scriptures," and should therefore be received with holy fear. They have been sent down from the throne above by divine benevolence, and speak with the voice and authority of God to a sinful world. This is the roll written full within and without with the characters of celestial wisdom and love, effulgent with the lustre of high divinity, discovering to us the counsels of the Most High; and it is the single and only communication of the kind he has ever made or ever will make for the instruction and comfort of wanderers from the way of life. It is not a document interesting from its peculiarity, or curious from its antiquity merely, but we possess, we handle a volume that has claims with which no other single volume nor all others united can compare. It is THE BOOK; the golden epistle from the court of our Sovereign;

and "whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed." To contemn a king's edict is an affront offered to majesty itself: and to slight the written word is to slight him whose stamp it bears. It is to forfeit all the mercies it proffers and to incur all the evils it denounces. Believing it then to bear this character, that God speaks in every line, what reverence becomes us when we take it in hand, what solicitude and care that we may not seem to despise its author. If the followers of the false Prophet pay an almost religious homage to a single leaf of the Koran that may casually meet their eye, shall we display less reverence for the word that is spirit and that is life? I esteem it all important that this sentiment should be instilled into the minds of the young at an early period, and that it should be fostered with the utmost diligence and tenderness, that so it may ripen into the habitual frame of their spirits. And I may add, not for the Bible alone, but for religious things in general, for all sacred ordinances and observances should reverence be inculcated upon them, as one powerful means by which conscience may be kept tender, and their feet be preserved from the paths of the destroyer. Surely nothing is more affecting, while nothing is more foul and offensive than to behold youth hardened against the impressions of seriousness and early daring to despise things sacred as well as profane. The Bible and religious themes are never likely to profit their souls; nor can it be hoped that civil authority or parental restraint will continue long to be respected, if in opening years the fear of God has been cast away from them, and conscience is already so far seared that it suffers no shock from a rude or light treatment of that which is heaven's last, peculiar gift.—Do not say that the course I recommend would pre-occupy the mind with mere prejudice and encourage bigotry that shuns reflection and research. I would indeed pre-occupy their minds: but it should be with affectionate reverence for a treasury that contains the things that belong to their peace. I would make them feel that it is too solemn for a jest, too true and momentous to be lightly cast aside. I would strive to fortify them against the seductive voice of earthly blandishments, against the whispered insinuations or open revilings of the unbeliever, by entwining veneration most profound for the lively oracles with their infantine associations, and making them feel that to bow with subjection where God hath spoken, is the perfection of human reason. Said an eminent statesman of our country, who had been exposed to the fury of that tempest with which infidelity many years ago desolated the world, "I should have been an infidel, if I could have forgotten how my mother in infancy taught me the Lord's Prayer." So the impression fixed in the minds of our children, that the book to which they were drawn by a mother's love, which they were accustomed to see in a father's hand at the morning and evening oblation, is the very word of God, may become the means of preserving them from much speculative and practical impiety. And in a day like the present, when truly the foundations are out of course, particularly would I desire as a first point, that this idea may pervade all their thoughts and feelings in

relation to the Sacred Scriptures; that it may be inwrought, as it were, with the fibres of their minds, to grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength: that something may be stable in their apprehensions while all else is in commotion, something august while all beside that was esteemed venerable is disregarded, something sacred amidst abounding profanity, something hopeful of heaven amidst the wrecks and woes and tears of this sinful earth.

2. The importance of this duty also appears when we open the sacred volume and observe its contents. It is eminently a book of principles; and they the most pure and elevated for the formation of the character: of precepts the most distinct and appropriate, and at the same time the most penetrating, for the government of the temper and the direction of the life. It does not, like almost all human systems of ethics, mislead the mind by exaggerated representations of the purity and dignity of man without a recognition of his fallen estate, by flattering his pride with notions of innate perfection unsullied, of inherent power undisturbed by the fact of deep depravity: it does not lead him to misconceive the end of his being by confining his thoughts to the world, nor present a partial and inadequate view of his duties by overlooking his relations to God and eternity, through an absorbing attention to time and to man. Its principles are grand and wide-reaching, its precepts adapted to his wants wherever he touches life about him or ascends to God above him. Search when you will through the stores of ages, but from no source can you draw maxims so clear, so apposite, so pervading. The vain boasting of the disputers of this world is put to shame, the accumulated wisdom of heathen moralists sinks into insignificance before the sublime teachings of this moralist of the skies; and its lessons moreover are imparted in a form and manner fitted especially to allure and impress the young. By historical details and examples, by simple delineations of individual characters which illustrate principles, by vivid pictures of domestic scenes and every-day life, by the finest descriptions and inimitable strokes of beauty and pathos, by poetry and narrative, they engage all the thoughts and distil their sweetness into the heart. The parent or teacher must possess little skill indeed, who cannot with such aids as the Scriptures abundantly supply, awaken the curiosity of a child and interest while he instructs his mind.

3. But we may rise still higher. From the Scriptures alone can we obtain a knowledge of "the true and perfect doctrine of SALVATION;" of the grand fact that there is forgiveness with God for the sins of men, and of the way by which it may be enjoyed. The necessities of the soul are here eminently consulted. They are the authorized sources of the highest and most essential knowledge. They alone "are able to make wise unto salvation." There the character of that holy and sovereign God with whom we have to do, the nature of his government over moral creatures, the righteous requirements of his law, are revealed. There our own sinfulness, with its dreadful and certain consequences, is displayed: the deceitful workings, the entire depravity,

of the human heart are affectingly exhibited. There is unfolded the way of life through the redemption by Jesus Christ: the excellence and sufficiency of his mediatorial work, and the mode of its application to purify the guilty conscience. There the Spirit's office and agency are distinctly set forth: our dependence on the one hand and our duties on the other: the way of escape from the perdition of hell, the way to attain the ineffable glories of heaven. By instruction and argument, by persuasion and warnings, by motives various and tender, are we entreated to forsake the course of sin, and choose and walk in the way of life. These teachings we truly need; they are applicable to the life that now is as well as that which is to come; they are adapted to every age and condition, and where else will you go to find them? The Scriptures alone are the crystal fountain whence flow the waters of the river of life. They alone are adapted to our real necessities. They can alone refresh the soul parched and athirst in a land of weariness and great drought. No other source of knowledge, no other study or pursuit, will meet the wants of our condition, the cravings of the mind after pure and permanent bliss. And if we really believe this, that these are things committed to us and to our children, in which their immortal interests as well as our own are concerned, can we hesitate whether it is our duty to teach, whether it is important that they should learn them. We may furnish and adorn their minds with much besides; we may invest their persons with the outward charms of polished gracefulness, we may endow them with wealth—the fruit of strenuous toil—but if they be still destitute of the inward adorning of the heart, what shall it profit? In that day when God shall come to take the soul, what shall it profit? If we would not only enjoy the benefits the Gospel confers ourselves, but desire that our children also may enjoy them, plainly should we instil into their early thoughts the wisdom which the Holy Ghost teacheth. Nor, when we neglect this duty, can we reasonably expect that in after-life our children should possess great familiarity with the Scriptures, be rooted and grounded in the truth, be imbued with its spirit and taste largely of its consolations. It were as if we should anticipate a bountiful crop when the soil has not been prepared and when no seed has been sown.—We may not indeed promise that in every instance our toil shall be repaid with speedy and abundant success: yet have we reason to believe that the good seed of the kingdom shall not be lost. He that soweth, soweth in hope. But surely we are not authorized by any analogies in the natural or spiritual world, to expect large results where we have bestowed little or no culture. At this point there is a strange and culpable remissness chargeable upon many Christian parents. The subject does not lie upon their minds with sufficient weight, nor do they ponder it in their hearts. Instead of making it a matter of conscience, cherishing the sense of solemn obligation, and prayerfully seeking divine guidance and success, often they are indifferent: satisfied if they can shift the burden upon others, ministers or sabbath-school instructors, very readily taking it for granted that they perform the task. Or if

they attempt it themselves, it is in a manner hurried and unconcerned, so as to awaken no interest in the mind of the child, and of course so as to preclude deep impression or lasting benefit. And yet they wonder that children brought up amidst Bibles and taken to the house of God should display such ungodly tempers, or run to such excess of evil. The painful fact is sometimes observed, it is true, in children of pious parents, and when religious instruction has been carefully given, so that they are not chargeable with gross dereliction of duty. Yet it is without doubt true, that in most instances of the kind, the result is to be attributed to some parental mismanagement which unhappily defeated the end of instruction, if that instruction has been given. But let the duty be properly discharged, and although we may not dictate to a sovereign lord with regard to the conversion and salvation of our offspring, we may yet hope in a promising God who has said that "the children of his servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before him."

4. But this duty is also one of express scriptural inculcation: "Train up a child in the way in which he should go." To which is annexed the promise that "when he is old he will not depart from it." God speaks of his statutes to Israel, as the "Commandments which I command thee, thou and thy son and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged." "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou lyest down, and when thou riseth up." Surely the claims of the New Testament are not less imperative, its teachings less important, and the subject therefore comes home with all the force of a divine command. Paul recognizes the duty and its happy effects in the case of the youthful Timothy.

It is proper here to notice a singular perversion of common sense, as well as a most unbecoming slight to the word of God and the souls of their children, of which some parents are guilty. Under the plea of prudence, deference to the sacred rights of conscience, and similar considerations, they seek to justify themselves for abstaining from all interference in the matter; at least from authoritative and particular activity. Thus they fear their children may become disgusted with religion, should they insist that the Bible and religious books shall be studied by them; and the more so as there are deep things here, which their tender minds cannot comprehend. How early a child may comprehend enough of the truth to become the means of renewing and sanctifying the heart we cannot tell. But many recorded instances are there for the encouragement of faith and to quicken our diligence, of such as at an infant age have shown that they knew and embraced Jesus their Savior. What reason have we to suppose that he, who when upon earth, with a benignity all his own, took little children in his arms and blessed them, will not from heaven impart to them his grace? Why should we fear they will become disgusted with religion if properly dealt with? And if improperly, they may become disgusted with anything.

But religion is a subject so solemn and mysterious, so deep and difficult, they think it best not to interfere. There are so many and such various schemes, that they will not assume the responsibility of deciding the case, and forestalling the minds of their children by a set creed. That is a matter of which each should be left free to judge for himself. We venture to affirm that of such reasoning the glaring absurdity would be in a moment perceived, if employed on any other subject than religion, and would be too shocking to be uttered. Because creeds may vary, the interpretations of men may differ, therefore the young may not study God's word. Because religion is a most solemn thing—so solemn that without true religion the soul is lost—therefore their children shall have nothing to do with it. Did ever parent act on such a principle in the worldly education of his offspring? Does any so reason respecting human science? But remember, if you will exclude religion, you cannot exclude irreligion. They will learn: nor need you be surprised, if, where such maxims and conduct are observed, they should learn to despise and reject all religion. If you should behold them seated in the chair of the scorner, do not marvel.—Besides, this extreme sensitiveness is partial; this peculiar liberality which would debar religious instruction, and hold the minds of youth perfectly unoccupied with a creed, is not fairly carried out until you have reduced them to the condition of absolute heathen. For only by a complete separation from Bibles and Sanctuaries and Sabbaths, and all religious observances, could you be assured they would receive no bias. Moreover, they are in the midst of a community where these things are themes of conversation, and they may thus receive some impression. They may hear there is a God, and be told there is a heaven—a hell; that they have souls to be saved, or to be lost. And what then? Away with such impious folly! Be assured that while you are thus sensitive and reserved in implanting the seeds of religion, error and impiety will strike deep their roots, and produce their bitter harvest. Is the youth furnished, as a feeling heart would desire, for the business, the temptations, the snares of the world, who has no fixed religious principles? Or are the truths of the Bible, its sublime doctrines, its comforting promises, its glorious hopes, of so little moment to the man, that the youth can well afford to be without them?

II. Let us turn to notice some of the grounds of *encouragement* to the faithful discharge of the duty we have been considering. For although as far as parents and especially Christian parents are concerned, the inestimable value to their offspring of the instruction to be imparted, in connection with the fact that their diligent care is an undoubted duty, made apparent from the teachings and spirit of the Bible, may be all-sufficient; yet in this as in other instances our gracious Lord has combined hope with effort: something greatly to encourage the heart, while in the performance of duty.

1. In the first place then, from the very nature of the case, we may reasonably anticipate a large share of success, and the happiest results from such work of faith and labor of love. And in every employment

the fair prospect of success stimulates activity and sweetens toil. Remember that youth is of all the seasons of life the best in which to make impressions: in which they are most readily produced and take the firmest hold upon the mind. Man may, in a very important sense, be called a creature of education. He is usually in his tastes and habits, in his modes of thinking and acting, in his moral sentiments and sensibilities in mature life, very much what the influences exerted upon him in youth, in childhood, even in the nursery and the cradle, were adapted to make him. The instances are rare and remarkable indeed, if ever they occur, in which he so entirely emancipates himself from these, that no trace of their power can be afterwards discerned. The thought is solemn truly, and full of admonition, but it is also consolatory. For if to your hands is committed the moulding of character, the formation of mental and moral habitudes, the period is most favorable, and the materials on which you operate are pliable. Like the softened wax, as they easily receive, so will they retain almost any impression you may give. Then the mind is inquisitive and alert. Curiosity is all awake. The eye is vigilant and observation keen, the ear open catching every sound, and the various faculties prompt to their functions, intently fulfilling the great law of their being, to seek and to know.—The memory is ready and retentive; and if stored with Bible truths will faithfully preserve them. And what if that they read be not fully understood? It is so with yourselves. It is so in regard to every science. It is the condition of our present state in all relations to "know but in part." Yet we may not therefore withhold the materials which may be intelligently applied when the judgment ripens.—The affections also are in youth more tender and susceptible than in after-years. The heart less occupied with corroding cares, less contaminated by evil example, is comparatively easy of access, which afterwards may become harder than the nether mill-stone. All the circumstances of the case invite you in the morning to sow the seed of spiritual and eternal good. And since it is certain that at this period you cannot prevent them from contact with evil, from all connection with the vicious around them, as they are necessarily and actively undergoing the process of education, as their faculties and dispositions are in a course of rapid development under the influences which press upon them on every side, the question is whether you will be at the pains of instilling the gospel into their minds, and as far as possible fortifying them against temptation by its sentiment and spirit, or whether you well negligently lose the most promising opportunity and the best advantages for giving a holy direction to their whole future life.

2. We are encouraged by special and gracious promises. Indeed the young seem to share very largely in covenant provisions, and to be regarded in Scripture with a special and peculiar interest. The tender and considerate Savior has not repressed the yearnings of the parental heart. The God who has constituted the relation has not frowned upon the strong crying and tears with which we supplicate that our children may live before him. "Children are the heritage of the Lord." They

are his property. And where his venerable name has been named upon them, where they have been remembered before him in many prayers, and instructed from his word in the spirit of faith, he who said "I will be thy God," with infinite compassion, has condescended to add, "And the God of thy seed after thee." "His faithfulness is unto all generations." "His righteousness is unto children's children." Throughout their career, he will not be unmindful of them, nor withdraw his protecting hand. And if in the giddiness of youth, or amidst absorbing cares and alluring objects to which manhood is exposed, passion may hurry them away from the path of rectitude, yet the seed sown is there, and he will water it. Amidst their wanderings he will recollect whose they are. He will observe the seal upon their foreheads. The toilsome culture of years gone by, the prayers from lips that may have long mouldered in the dust, shall come up in memorial before him, and return in showers of grace. May we not hope it? Is it not enough in accordance with his spiritual Providence to give animation to our exertions?

3. Finally, there is encouragement from the manifest blessings which do attend such labors. Of the many instances of engaged piety on record in every age, it surely is not affirming too much to say that the great majority were such as had enjoyed the benefits of a religious education. Where they attained to special eminence and became shining lights in the world, it was because of a special discipline. The annals of piety are replete with examples. I am persuaded, moreover, that if we should trace back the history of the Church at large with reference to this particular, we should discover that her ranks had been replenished, her numbers augmented in Christian lands, chiefly from among those who were either the children of pious parents, or had been nurtured where the dews of Bible truths were distilled around and upon them. How emphatic and encouraging such a fact! Nor ought it to be overlooked that in the revivals of religion which have so widely spread over the land, a very large proportion of those who became the subjects of a hopeful change and have subsequently adorned their profession, have come from the same class. In the family circle, in the sabbath school, under catechetical instruction, (which, however, has to a lamentable extent fallen into disuse), they became prepared, if we may so speak, to acknowledge the force of truth and exemplify the power of godliness. God has said that there shall be a seed to serve him in every generation. And by such means, when the aged have been withdrawn, the children have been qualified to stand in their places. The babes in Christ have become mature in grace. Multitudes of them, under proper training, have passed into the communion of the Church on earth, and have honored her ordinances: and multitudes have been translated in full hope, to shine in the realms of light.

The subject claims, in application, the serious consideration of youth themselves. The advantages you enjoy are truly great; and we are not left to doubt that by the means of moral and spiritual improvement which a bountiful God has bestowed, he designs not only to bless you

individually, but to prepare a seed to serve him in the coming ages of his Church. Yet to reap the blessing, to be useful, reflect that much, very much depends upon yourselves. Timothy was a holy man and an able minister, because he had been an apt and attentive scholar. Ask yourselves seriously, what am I the better for all the means of knowledge and grace I have so fully enjoyed? And oh! let not your greater mercies increase the woes of final and everlasting condemnation.

Let parents also lay these things to heart. They will, it is to be presumed, acknowledge the importance of the subject, and may observe that they have delightful encouragement to faithful and persevering effort. Their own best hopes in regard to their children, the hopes of the Church, the hopes of the world, are most intimately connected with family religion, and especially with Bible instruction and Bible influence brought to bear upon the opening mind in that hallowed sphere, the domestic scene. Mothers, here is your retired but momentous province. Here you wield a power that, if rightly exerted, will be felt in widening circles, and will pass on and transmit its benefits to generations yet unborn. From your hand will come forth many young Timothies, who from childhood have known the Holy Scriptures, and have been prepared to adorn and bless their age. How solemn the responsibility! Yet how delightful the work! How honorable and beautiful the tribute which Scripture and history unite in paying to maternal influence. Theirs is the noble, enviable office of forming the character in its earliest development. Need we ask a father's or a mother's heart, if aught shall be wanting on their part to form it for truth, for virtue, for holiness, for heaven.

To sabbath-school teachers, a single word—your employment is arduous, but it is promising. It is responsible, but it is full of consolation. Let the past animate you: the obvious blessing of God upon this mode of doing good: the cheering fact that so many who have been trained in these institutions have been already gathered into the Church, like sheaves from the harvest, let this ever give warmth to your hearts, and energy to your service; since you need not fear that you will labor in vain, and spend your strength for naught. No good work, as yours eminently is, undertaken and prosecuted in the spirit of faith and prayer, will be suffered to pass without a blessing. Go on, diligent and hopeful. He whom you seek to honor, will in due season own and reward your toil.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 12. Vol. XVI.) DECEMBER, 1842. (Whole No. 192.

SERMON CCCXXXVII.

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THE TIME OF THE END UNCERTAIN.

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."—Acts i., 6, 7.

Mankind are naturally disposed to pry into those future events in which they may by any possibility be concerned. Such a disposition, even when there are no grave reasons to justify its indulgence, is yet almost universal, under the name of curiosity. Some of those events, however, obviously depend, in part, for their occurrence, on the ignorance of the persons who are to be affected by them, and yet more of those who are to have some agency in bringing them about; and in such cases we cannot conceive of the desired foreknowledge being obtained, and at the same time the events to which it relates remaining unaffected. For this, and for other reasons, men are kept in ignorance of the greater part of those things which yet they desire to foreknow. They live on, with a veil before them, which their utmost endeavors cannot remove, which no art of theirs can penetrate. But it is not less plainly expedient for them to be assured of other things in which they are to be concerned. For the better discharge of their present duties, they need such instruction, warning, and encouragement, as can be drawn only from coming events. It seems to be a prerogative of man, in distinction from inferior creatures, that, to a considerable extent, he may anticipate what will be from reflecting on what has been, and is capable of receiving information, through various modes, as to events the most remote, whether in past or future time, and the most foreign to his personal experience. We have both capacity and occasion for some measure of this knowledge. These several facts are recognized in the Bible. In adaptation to human wants, it is a revelation of futurity; yet a partial revelation. Many things it discloses, many more things it leaves hidden as before. It predicts the most momentous events in time and in eternity; but there are numberless questions respecting those events, on which it baffles all human curiosity.

An illustration of this thought is found in the words of our Savior, to which I turn your attention at this time. They relate to an event whose certainty is important to be known, and is therefore revealed, though its nature seems to have been but imperfectly apprehended by the inquirers on this occasion, and need not be now precisely ascertained. The information that was sought concerning it, was withheld. And in connection with these words, my object now is to show, that it does not belong to us to foreknow the time of the end of this present dispensation, or order of things, or the time when the glorious reign of Christ will be introduced, or the time of his second coming. *The time of the end is to us uncertain.* Before considering the language of the text, as it was addressed to the apostles, I wish to separate the doctrine to be maintained, from some other questions with which it is commonly connected, and to suggest some preliminary observations in its favor.

The future triumph of Christ's kingdom on the earth, is an event about which, as thus described, there is a general agreement among all who receive the Scriptures. But whether he will then reign on the earth in person, or only through his Spirit and his truth; whether his reign will be introduced by the extermination of his enemies, the resurrection of some or all of the righteous dead, and the renovation of the globe by fire, or will precede these changes; whether the Israel of God will then be his ancient people restored to their own land, in harmony with believing Gentiles, yet with some pre-eminence, or only a spiritual Israel, without any such distinction; whether the thousand years mentioned in the 20th chap. of John's Revelations, will precede or follow Christ's second advent, or are past already:—these are questions now agitated with some zeal; but these I do not here touch, and I wish you to keep them distinct from the point before us. That point is simply our knowledge or our ignorance of the time or season when this dispensation will end, or when the glorious reign of Christ on earth will commence,—whatever views we may entertain of the event itself. I am not to show that it will not take place at any particular time, whether in the next century, or next spring, or to-morrow; but only that we do not know when. And here I will find no fault with any who choose to say that the time is not a great way off. If you believe it is comparatively near, or near when the interval is measured on the scale of all time, so far as this we may be all agreed. It is more than 1800 years nearer than when the apostles inquired about it. It may be possible to know something of its approach. There may be reasons for expecting it within one or two centuries. Our Savior did not proscribe such inquiries nor such conclusions. But when men confidently predict that it will come within the life of this generation—that it will come next year, and even in this or that month in the year,—I am sure they speak unwarrantably. For aught they know, it may come a month after the present, or a century after the present. We may reply, in a legitimate application of our Savior's words, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

That it is not for us to foreknow the time when this dispensation will end, or Christ's glorious reign on earth will begin, I argue—

I. *From the analogy to be found in other great events under the government of God, and especially the event of death.*

If it be found that in administering his government over this world, God has often revealed the certainty of great events, yet commonly concealed their dates, we would properly expect to find the same thing true as to the most signal deliverances of his people, or judgments against his enemies, yet to be experienced. Turn, then, to these two classes of events already recorded.

God revealed to Noah his purpose to deluge the earth, and to save him only with his family from among mankind; and with this announcement, the patriarch received minute directions for the building of the ark. Yet it does not appear that the precise time was revealed even to Noah;* or, if we suppose it to have been revealed to him, as needful in view of all he had to do, still it does not appear to have been made known to others. Again, when Sodom and Gomorrah were to be destroyed, the hour was not foretold; and we know not how much time elapsed between the first announcement, and the visit of the two angels, which was the evening before they hastened away Lot. Again, when the descendants of Jacob were to endure a cruel bondage in Egypt, they were not told when it would begin, nor how long it would continue, for that servitude lay between the death of Joseph and their departure under Moses, about 144 years, and was therefore only a part of the time indicated in the prediction to Abraham and other passages; while yet the prediction gave them a right to expect deliverance; and the time of the event was revealed to them by its accomplishment. When at length they began their march through the wilderness, they could not learn how long it would continue; and in the same ignorance they remained, probably not far from two years, till by their murmurings they both incurred and learned the measure of their wanderings. (Numb. xiv., 33.) They looked for the land God had promised to their fathers, but were not told how soon they would possess it. Through the whole history of that people, we find predicted, from time to time, the glories and the calamities that were before them, and we see the events held up, but, with few exceptions, the dates concealed. Their captivities, while threatened before their approach, and understood to be limited according to the tenor of the ancient covenant, were of unknown dates, so far as I have

* Some understand Gen. vi., 3, "his days shall be an hundred and twenty years," of the interval predicted to the Flood. But how could that be possible, when Noah's three sons were living and probably married at the time of the prediction, yet were born after he was five hundred years old, and therefore were not over one hundred years old at the Flood, which was in his six hundredth year? Compare Gen. v. 32; vi., 3, 18; vii., 11. If any suppose there is a mention in the *New* Testament of one hundred and twenty years, as the time of the building of the ark, let them find it. Another view of the passage, perhaps more common, and clear of this difficulty, refers it to the reduced age of mankind. The reader may observe, an infidel cavil is set aside if the ark was not so long in building.

observed, with the exception of the seventy years in Babylon, foretold by Jeremiah. Nor do we anywhere find the period determined for the greatest event predicted in their history up to their dispersion, that is, the coming of their Messiah, except in Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks. The promise of a Redeemer we trace back to the very scene of the first transgression; but nearly fifty recorded generations, more than a hundred such as we reckon now, or about three thousand five hundred years, followed the transgressors before the time of his first coming could be even conjectured. The same uncertainty of course pertained to all those fortunes of the Jewish people, which were to be connected with that event. And the same may in general be said of the predictions of our Savior and his apostles. It will not be denied that such has been the ordinary method of God in his communications to mankind,—to make known great events before their occurrence, yet conceal their times and seasons. Though exceptions may be found in the case of individuals who could not properly avail themselves of a prediction without knowing the season of its fulfilment, yet his ordinary method is plainly such as I have stated. And hence we would expect a similar procedure as to the end of the present dispensation, or of the world.

But a more striking analogy is found in the event of death. In some respects it is indeed a very different thing from Christ's glorious coming or reign, but to every individual who has been or will be subjected to it, the one may be said to anticipate the other, as being the end of probation, and the entrance on an unchangeable career of bliss or woe. Now of all events that can befall mankind, none is more certain than this, if the world continues as it has been; yet none is more uncertain as to its date. As in diseases that are known to be fatal, it is yet impossible to foretell the hour of their termination, so, in the midst of health, mortality is an unavoidable, unquestionable fact in every man's natural condition, while God only can predict the hour or year of its occurrence. Why is it that every man knows he must die, yet no man can tell when? For wise reasons God has ordained it thus, in respect to the end of human life? Whatever those reasons may have been, why may they not hold good as to the end of the world? The fact that mankind have always been kept ignorant of the time of an event to them as certain and momentous as any other, would naturally lead us to expect a like uncertainty as to the time of the event we are considering.

Such analogies as these are worthy of our notice. Though they could never be alleged against a clear declaration, if there were one, in the Bible on this subject; yet they ought to be regarded as of weight in bringing us to a right position for ascertaining the truth by the aid of the Bible, especially when its testimony is capable of more than one interpretation. Let us remember, therefore, when men presume to tell us the date of the end, as a thing revealed to their eyes, that *such has not been the way of God* in his providence, or in his word.

II. *From the fact that such knowledge, on the part of men, does not seem desirable.*

Of course I admit that this consideration, like the last, could not stand against any clear declaration of the Bible; but it has its place on a question which the Bible does not explicitly determine beyond all suspense or doubt. It is a kind of argument which the uninspired "minor prophets" of our day are willing to employ when it suits their purpose. It will have an influence in our decision on many questions. And it has a legitimate influence to this extent, that if a proposed doctrine is in itself repugnant to our sober convictions of what is on the whole desirable, we have a right to insist the more on clear testimony in its behalf, before consenting to receive it; on something better than plausible conjectures and shadowy probabilities. Consider then whether, so far as we can judge, it would be for the best that men should foreknow the time when the present course of things will end. The inquiry is not as to the *event* itself, whenever it may take place; but as to the *foreknowledge* of its *time:* whether, desirable as the consummation must be on the whole, it would have been pleasant to good men, and salutary to the world, that its date should be disclosed.

Supposing the event in question to be the commencement of Christ's spiritual reign on the earth, or the universal prevalence of holiness; does it seem desirable that the date of it should have been revealed to mankind? If, on the one hand, that time be yet remote, it could not gratify nor animate us to know how long the world must wait for such a blessing; and, whenever the time may come, to the successive generations before us it was remote, inasmuch as it has not come yet, and to foreknow that it would be deferred so long, we cannot think would have been to them either a pleasure or a benefit. Yet if it is really indicated, as some contend, in the prophetic numbers, it has been discoverable there, in all its remoteness, for many centuries. If, on the other hand, it be near, the prospect might indeed be to us delightful; but we are only a small part of all who have lived, and we cannot pronounce that knowledge on the whole desirable, which must have deferred their hope, merely because it would hasten ours. There is reason also to fear that such a prospect, however pleasing, might now enervate instead of invigorating the hearts of good men; as the near prospect of success in any enterprise, where men have a part, often relaxes their vigilance and activity, more than all the difficulties and delays they have encountered.

Supposing, however, the time in question to be not merely the commencement of prevailing holiness on earth, but Christ's personal coming to raise the righteous dead and destroy his foes—which is the view of those who are most confident on this subject;—the foreknowledge of it must then appear still less desirable. Make the supposition, that God has purposed the event shall take place in the next century. Would it be best for the world to know that it will not come before? Yet if God had revealed it in his word, then, wherever that word has been read in ages past, the righteous might have been made to des-

pond, and the wicked to exult, in the prospect. Or make the supposition, that God has purposed the event shall take place the next year. Do you rejoice in believing that probation will cease while not more than a fragment of the whole adult human family will have been saved, rather than in believing that it will continue for an indefinite period, during which, by the greater spread and prevalence of the Gospel, the number of the saved may, on the whole scale of time, come to exceed that of the lost? If indeed this were known to be God's plan, his people would acquiesce; but if there is room for hesitating whether he has revealed it, benevolence would naturally dictate, at least while many things related to it remain obscure as now, that we leave the matter in suspense. But, looking at the supposed event by itself, and not as compared with universal holiness preceding it, would the foreknowledge of it, as so soon to arrive, be pleasant and profitable to good men? "It must be pleasant to a Christian," say some, "because he will so soon see his Savior." But this may be said of death also, and this was the reason Paul gave for desiring death—not for desiring the end of the world,—"having a desire to depart and to be with Christ," counting it "gain to die," though to him "to live" was "Christ." Yet surely every Christian is not of course eager to die. On the contrary, this world is desirable for him during his allotted time, and Christ's intercession for his followers was, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Because the vision of Christ itself appears inviting, whether by means of death or of his personal coming, we cannot infer that either event would make his people happy at any other than the appointed time, and still less that it would be desirable for them to foreknow that time. Again, we are told, "it must be pleasant to be among the living when Christ appears, and thus escape corruption." But says Paul, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed;" and you know not what violence there may be in this "change," since it must in some way answer to that death which has "passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." But if, so far as you are concerned, the prospect were all pleasure, would it overcome all your regard for others whom it threatens with imminent destruction? When Paul says it would be far better for him to depart and be with Christ than to live, he adds, "nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you;" and if you have his spirit, you will not care less for those who are to be destroyed when you are saved, than he cared for those whom he would leave in a world of mercy if he were taken away. And apart from your pleasure, would the prospect be, on the whole, an advantage to you, or an injury, in the work of doing good? And would it have a salutary influence on the minds and habits and interests of mankind? Remember that the same revealed fact, if it should prove an advantage to the present generation by nearly concerning them, would have operated unfavorably on past generations by concerning them remotely. But waiving that point; in answering this question, turn

again to the illustration drawn from death. That arrangement of Providence by which all men are made certain of the fact, yet ignorant of its date, we cannot doubt is a beneficent arrangement. And one reason for it, is doubtless this; that while men obviously need the restraint imposed by the certainty of the event, if they knew it to be remote, they would disregard it far more than now; and if, on the other hand, they knew it to be very near, it would unfit them for the common duties of life, and make even their preparation for eternity more confused and precarious than now. Let a man become possessed with the notion that he has but a little while to live: and we find, that though not yet disabled by sickness, he is in a great measure disqualified for his ordinary worldly duties, for the industry and enterprise that are proper to his condition in this world; and his attention is likely to be diverted from the interests of others, public and private, to his own personal fears. In the affairs of religion, too, he is exposed to an undue predominance of selfish alarm among his governing motives, and hence to hasty and delusive impressions; so that cases of conviction and conversion on what is supposed to be the bed of death, are regarded by all experienced observers with great distrust, not only from their general knowledge of human infirmity, but from the too frequent issue of like appearances in cases of unexpected recovery. Hence, when such an expectation extensively prevails, as under the approach of some fatal pestilence, the religious impressions witnessed are far less relied on than at other times. It is not from terror pervading the public mind, that we ever look for revivals of religion, if even for a solitary conversion. Now would we not apprehend the same questionable influence, in a community that should know themselves to be living in the last month or year of the world? If the prospect of impending death incapacitates a man for the common business of life, even though he expects that others, dependent on him, will reap benefit from his present exertions, much more would he be affected by the approach of a catastrophe that should overwhelm all alike. And if, besides merely physical causes, the fear of death is apt to make those religious appearances that begin in the last hours of life, delusive, the fear of an event still more awful must tend to similar delusion. The conversions that might seem to be wrought under the power of such an expectation, would be for that reason, to say the least, liable to a just suspicion. At various periods men have been made to believe that the day of judgment was at hand, and some were seemingly brought to repentance; but are those the seasons most distinguished by the "fruits meet for repentance?" If now the same belief is said to multiply conversions, wise men will doubt it till time tests both the cause and the effect. That very influence on account of which some might choose this expectation should prevail—its effect on careless men of the world—might bring more evil than good. And a still more obvious effect would be, to divert the activity and to derange the common business and interests of mankind. As we can see it to be best for man that he should not foreknow the time of his death, though the event is certain, so it would appear to be best for

him, and for similar reasons, that he should not foreknow the time of the end of the world. And as God has left him ignorant in the one case, so it might be presumed God would leave him ignorant in the other. But the Christian philanthropist might suffer an injury from foreseeing the end of the world at hand, which he would not suffer from foreseeing his own. Would he pray and exert himself, as many have done, for the diffusion of the gospel, or for the salvation of mankind, if he knew that before it can be carried round the globe, the globe itself, with its whole unconverted population, will be wrapt in flames? We need not ask how it would be; for is it not found, that they who now cherish such an expectation, abandon that which they before cherished of the conversion of the heathen, and withhold from them accordingly their prayers and charities? They wait now for God to give his Son "the heathen for his inheritance"—not, as in the consecrated petition of the church, for his "portion," as "his people" are, but that he may "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel!" Might we not presume that a foreknowledge which would bring to an end all the beneficent operations of God's people in behalf of a surrounding world, God in his mercy, not only to the world but to his people, would withhold? The great interests of benevolence between man and man, seem thus to make such knowledge undesirable, as being rather pernicious than salutary in its tendency.

So far, therefore, as we can judge, it does not appear desirable that men should foreknow when the present state of things will end, whether we suppose that event to be near or remote; not even if it be only the commencement of a reign of holiness, and far less if it be the end of probation. I do not speak now of the more unhappy consequences of believing the end of all things to be near, through a mistaken interpretation of the Bible, and then finding the expectation vain—though I fear much mischief of that kind will yet be witnessed, as it has been before: but supposing the event to be really near, we find reasons why its date should be hidden from mortal eyes. And these reasons, like the analogy before pointed out in respect to other events made known by God, though they could not stand against the clear declarations of his word, if such there were, do naturally affect us, and ought to affect us, in the view we take of those times and seasons which he has not there clearly revealed. Bearing these things in mind, we are brought to the question of fact, whether God has clearly revealed the time when this present dispensation will end. That we do not foreknow it, I argue

III. *From the uncertainty attending the interpretation of the Scriptures on this subject.*

Of course, within my present limits, I cannot minutely comment on the passages which have been the occasion of so much controversy. My object now is to remind you of what I should think no candid and enlightened student of the Bible could refuse to confess, the manifold difficulty of ascertaining the time in question, from the passages that are supposed to reveal it, if it is anywhere revealed.

Adverting now only to the prophecy of Daniel: consider the pains bestowed on its interpretation with reference to this question, and the perplexity and confusion that have the more prevailed among its interpreters. From age to age, pious and learned men have pored over its pages, yet what endless diversity, what total repugnance, in their conclusions. It is strange that men who know the history of prophetic interpretation, can rely on their own with all the confidence they wonder at in their predecessors. And nothing in this book is more open to diversity of interpretation, than the indication of time. It must be made out by a comparison of several particulars, each of which is matter of dispute. Any conclusion as to the precise time when the present state of things will terminate, must rest on the decision of several subordinate questions, and partake of the uncertainty belonging to each and all of those questions. I can only name some of them here. Whether the kingdom signified by the "fourth beast" in the 7th chapter was the Roman empire or not, is a matter of doubt. If it was, there is still more difficulty in determining what were the "ten horns" or kingdoms, that arose from it. Nor is it clearly proved that the "little horn" or kingdom, which afterwards came up among them and subdued three of them, was the papal power, rather than Antiochus Epiphanes; indeed this interpretation is comparatively modern, and not universal even among Protestants. If it was the papal power, and if the "time and times and the dividing of time," during which the saints were to be "given into his hand," signified 1260 years, it is more than difficult, it is impossible, to determine positively when that power began; for instead of dating, as some suppose, from A.D. 538, the pope gained ecclesiastical superiority long before that period, and did not become a temporal prince till long after it, and therefore several dates are nearer the truth than this: nor can the end be foreknown from the duration of his sway, until its beginning is ascertained. Again: it is left exceedingly doubtful who was meant by the "little horn," in the 8th chapter. It came from one of the four that rose up in the place of the great horn, which signified Alexander, whose empire was divided into four parts after his death; and this king or power, springing from one of those divisions, has been most generally understood to signify Antiochus.* That the Roman power, whether pagan or papal, is signified by it, I take to be a modern and certainly doubtful theory. Then, as to the 2300 days, which were to elapse before the sanctuary should be cleansed: it has never been proved that those *days* signified *years*, and so long as there is nothing said in this book to that effect, it cannot be proved by two or three instances of some such usage in other books where the context requires it. Indeed, so far as the language is considered, the argument is in favor of their being literal or natural days. And as such, they allow the plausible application they have generally

* Bishop Newton, though he prefers another view, admits that "this little horn is by the generality of interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, ancient and modern, supposed to mean Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, who was a great enemy and cruel persecutor of the Jews."—*Diss. on Proph.*, 15.

received to Antiochus. If they were years, it does not appear that they were of the same length in the chronology then used among the Jews, as in our own; nor, if they were, can it be shown from what point they were computed; for to make them include, as some do, the seventy weeks, or 490 years, mentioned in the 9th chapter, is taking for granted the thing in question. The same may be said of the numbers given in the 12th chapter. It remains to be shown that those *days* meant *years;* and if years were meant, still the date of their beginning remains uncertain, and therefore the date of their ending. And if all this were determined, we are left uncertain as to *what* will happen *when* they terminate.* These instances are enough for our present purpose. Not only have they been all controverted among pious and learned men, but they have given abundant occasion for controversy. They are attended with difficulties and perplexities which, to say the least, leave great room for doubt, and ought to check the confidence of the most capable interpreter. Let it be considered, too, that any conclusion drawn from this prophecy as to the time of the end, will be invalidated by mistaking the truth on any one of these chief questions. They are closely connected among themselves; one stands upon another. For example, if the "fourth beast" in the 7th chapter does not signify the Roman empire, then the little horn that grew from it cannot be the papacy; and if the little horn there or in the 8th chapter be the persecuting king Antiochus, instead of the papacy, then its history was all told, in literal days, long before the Christian era; and of course, if the *days*, in Daniel's usage, do not signify *years*, they have nothing to do with what we now call the time of the end. If, therefore, there is a single item, in the calculations drawn from this source, on which there is room for great uncertainty, the whole chronological argument built upon them is undermined. If there is considerable uncertainty as to two or more items on which the other must rest, the result cannot be relied on, according to any just doctrine of probabilities. But without applying a method that might be thought too rigorous in matters of this kind, the uncertainty I have pointed out is enough to show that the book of Daniel—esteemed the stronghold of prophetic chronology—does not warrant the minute and confident predictions sometimes based upon it, nor authorize us to believe that God intended we should know the precise time of the end. Did this opportunity permit, some similar uncertainty, as to that time, might be pointed out in John's Revelations. If these two prophecies do not teach men, beyond reasonable doubt, when the present dispensation will end, then it is not for men to know that season which the Father hath put in his own power.

IV. *From the ignorance of the apostles—and even of the man Christ Jesus—on this subject.*

* Bishop Newton admits, "Here are then three different periods assigned, 1260, 1290, and 1335 years; and what is the precise time of their beginning and consequently of their ending, as well as what are the great and signal events which will take place at the end of each period, we can only conjecture; time alone can with certainty discover."

As to the apostles, the text is decisive. After our Lord's resurrection, the eleven inquired of him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Probably, as I have intimated, their notions of his reign were as yet vague, if not erroneous. Perhaps they retained some such expectations as they had before betrayed, of a worldly kingdom, which he would set up to the subversion of the Roman power and the aggrandizement of the Jewish people; for if these expectations had been discouraged by his violent death, they might easily have revived in view of his glorious resurrection. The nature of his kingdom was not, however, the main subject of this conversation. The question regards the season of its establishment and triumph. And in his answer, he neither confirms nor contradicts their opinions as to its nature, but only meets their question, whether he is about to assume it at this time. On this point he tells them, it is not for them to receive the information they are seeking, or such knowledge does not of right belong to them: the Father hath put in his own power, or determined by his own authority, the times or seasons in which the events he has predicted will take place, and he does not see fit to make known those periods. The answer clearly implies, that our Lord had not then in every sense restored the kingdom to Israel, or that he had not already fulfilled the most glorious predictions regarding the Messiah's kingdom; and that at some future period he would reign, according to those predictions, in the splendor of a triumphant and acknowledged king. But in whatever sense it was true that he would restore the kingdom to Israel, whatever was the glorious reign predicted for the Messiah by the ancient prophets, he here affirmed most pointedly, that it did not belong to his apostles to foreknow the period which God had appointed for it. We are left to apply the declaration, generally, to those great events which had been foretold, and among them to this event of Christ's future reign. The words, "times or seasons," are suited to occurrences more or less definite, the last being the more specific designation of time. Thus, notwithstanding the minute and positive anticipations that are held forth on this subject—and one would think there ought to be no room for doubt in a matter so confidently handled—the apostles were explicitly taught, that it was not for them to know the times or the seasons which the Father had determined.

Accordingly their epistles show, in several places, that neither they, nor the Christians to whom they wrote, foreknew the date of what is called "the day of the Lord." Peter says, it "will come as a thief in the night;" (2 Pet. iii., 10.) that is, suddenly, or without forewarning as to its season. In Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians, immediately after that description of the Lord's descent from heaven which raised such expectations that in his second letter he proposed to allay them, he adds, "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." (1 Thess. v., 1, 2.) And when he adds, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that

day should overtake you as a thief," he does not teach that it would not come suddenly to Christians, but only that since they were enlightened as to the fact that it would so come, it would not injuriously surprise them, because, with such a conviction, they would live in habitual p eparation for it; and accordingly he adds again, "Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch." The suddenness of the event thus spoken of, can scarcely be ascribed by those who now claim to have ascertained its date, to the unbelief and negligence of the church in those days; for these persons contend that the early Christians held a doctrine like their own on this subject, and were consoled and animated by the conviction in the most trying circumstances. Nor did this language imply that the event was, strictly speaking, near; or if it did, the apostles are shown to have mistaken the time, since it has not yet arrived. In Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians, he would not have them troubled by what he had said before, as though "the day of Christ were at hand," for there was to be "a falling away first;" from which he appears to have been aware of some interval, yet not of its length. The manner in which the apostles spoke of that day, naturally meant, that, for aught they knew, it might then be near, because they knew not whether it was near or distant; and in speaking of it, they lost sight of intervening time. In a word, they knew as little on the subject as we would have expected them to know, from our Lord's answer to their question. Nor can it be said that though destitute of this knowledge at first, they might have acquired it afterwards. To suppose such a thing, is a mere assumption. If this knowledge did not then belong to them, with the prophecies in their hands, what reason have we to suppose that they ever obtained it from the study of those same prophecies, or ever became entitled to it in this world? As if to guard them and us against such an impression, Jesus told them, not merely that they did not know the time, but that it was not for them to know; not only they were without this knowledge, but without any right or title to it.

Now from this undeniable ignorance of the apostles as to the time in question, two things may be inferred—

1. The obscurity already pointed out in the prophecies we have respecting it,—supposing it to be a subject of those prophecies. If Daniel foretold the time, why did they not learn it from that teacher? They were apt pupils of the inspired masters before them, and themselves inspired also for the future guidance of the church. If they did not see the date in Daniel's pages, we may well believe he does not there disclose it. And then the book of Revelations, so often quoted also on this subject, was the work of one of the apostles. Has he taught us what it was not for him to know? If so, we have indeed grown "wiser than our teachers." Can it be thought that an important date is definitely marked, as some would have us believe, in Daniel's prophecy, when the apostles did not there discover it; and in their writings also, when they did not themselves know it?

2. Another inference from their ignorance, is—our own. If it was not

for Christ's chosen disciples to know particularly when his most glorious reign would begin, neither was it for other Christians then. Is it for Christians now? If indeed it is for us, rather than the apostles, to foreknow that season, we must learn it from one or more of these three sources:

First: Can we learn it from Daniel's chronological predictions? But the apostles obtained no such information from that prophet. Yet they had access to his numbers as well as we, and surely they were not less capable of ascertaining the measures of time given to their own nation in their sacred books. Second: Can we learn it from the writings of the apostles themselves? Then they have taught us more than they ever knew. Third: Can we learn it from later developments than the apostles witnessed, under the providence of God? These may, indeed, be otherwise instructive; and no doubt it is possible for us to gather from the succession and concurrence of events, important lessons, partially or wholly unknown to the wisest men of earlier ages, on the subjects of ancient prophecy. The study of events, however, leads us over a vast field of most uncertain conjecture as well as salutary instruction, and therefore must teach us modesty rather than presumption, or else we are taught to no good purpose. But from the nature of the case, past events alone can never determine for us the date of that future event we are contemplating, if they can alone assure us of anything respecting it. And further, when they are employed for this purpose, not alone but in explanation of the prophetic numbers which are supposed to fix the date, observe that these numbers cannot depend upon those events for their significance. The times measured off by the prophets, were described according to some law or usage of human speech; and the prophets and their readers, and the apostles after them, were as capable as ourselves of ascertaining that method. The days enumerated by Daniel were no measure of time, except as they were either literal days, or years; and which of these two they were, the first Jewish readers ought to have known as well as we. But whether the first readers knew it or not, the apostles unquestionably did; for they lived long after the literal days, foretold in some places, had elapsed, and therefore, knowing whether the predicted events had occurred already, they could not fail to know whether those events would occur after the lapse of the literal years. For example, taking the largest number given, the apostles were at least as capable as ourselves of knowing what event was to take place after the 2300 days, announced in the 8th chapter of Daniel, and the point from which they were computed; they were at least as capable of knowing whether that event had happened in as many days; and knowing this, they knew whether it would happen in as many years. Thus, if that event was the one we have in view, they could learn its season from the prophetic number as well as we. Such knowledge, therefore, did not depend on the observation of subsequent events. In truth, it was to be obtained, not from "leadings of Providence," but from processes of arithmetic. Notwithstanding the later developments we witness, the ignorance of the apostles

on this point should lead us to infer our own.—If we have not learned the season in question by these means, we have not learned it at all. It remains as true of Christians and of all men now, as though Christ had addressed himself to them originally: it is not for them to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

But as if to leave no doubt on this matter—as if to include his apostles and all his followers, and even his own humanity, behind the same veil of uncertainty—Christ has left us, along with the declaration in the text, another which must not here be overlooked. In the 24th chapter of Matthew, in reply to the question of his disciples, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" after several predictions, he adds, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only;" and in the parallel passage in Mark's gospel (xiii., 32.) he adds again, "Neither the Son." Now, whatever may be the event referred to in that chapter, whether the destruction of Jerusalem, or the day of judgment, or the one as shadowing forth the other; its time or season the Father had determined, and the Father only knew. That we may understand here, by the word *day*, a season, and not literally a day, is rather warranted than forbidden by the preceding illustration of the fig tree; the summer, mentioned, corresponding to our whole warm season of spring and summer,* and giving signs of its nearness only as it came on, in the putting forth of the leaves. Now, even if the event which would come thus suddenly, was only the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place within forty years; can we suppose its date to have been so hidden from men and angels, and the man Christ Jesus, and at the same time suppose the humblest modern disciple to foreknow the date of an event far more remote and improbable? If, on the other hand, his coming was the very event in question, who now has that knowledge of it which he disclaimed for all creatures and for himself? I can scarcely bear to notice the comment by which some would evade this passage—that "though we cannot know the hour or the day, we may know the year."† It is a childish play on words, unworthy alike of good sense and reverent piety. This declaration of our Lord, if there were no other, should be enough to show us that the time of the end is to us uncertain.

V. *From the mistakes that have been made on this subject.*

They could hardly be enumerated in a whole discourse. A just account of them would make an interesting and profitable volume. Besides the diversity that has existed, and still exists, in the confident opinions of good men as to the prophecies which are not yet fulfilled, many others have been no less confidently maintained till time demonstrated their falseness. The "fifth monarchy men," as they were called, in the reign of the Puritans in England, are only one well-known example of the delusion to which good men are exposed in the interpretation of

* Robinson's Lex.

† It might be a fair set-off against such a comment, if we were to take the same liberty with *day* in this passage, that some take with it in the prophecies, and argue that we cannot know in what thousand years the end will come.

prophecy. They believed the time indicated by Daniel was at hand, and they were "the people of the saints of the Most High," to whom "the greatness of the kingdom" was about to be given; and nothing but time vanquished their delusion. Some similar delusions have flourished and faded away, in almost every age and country, if not all equally conspicuous. A strange sect is apt to plant itself on a mistaken interpretation of prophecy, till overturned by time. It has been a favorite weapon both of impostors and enthusiasts. And no application of prophecy has more often proved delusive than the attempt to ascertain the dates of predicted events, especially of the end of the world. It is no new thing for men to affirm, on the authority of the Bible, that the day of judgment is literally at hand; and it will be no new thing, if time compels them to confess their mistake and regret their presumption.

But let it be more particularly noticed, that they who now predict the precise time of the end, are already proved to be mistaken as to the events which they say are to precede it. The papal power, in their scheme, was to be broken in A.D. 1798, but the papacy was not broken then; to break it, requires more than the imprisonment of the pope; and not only is it still a persecuting power, but in many respects stronger since the French Revolution than before, and on the increase, we are told, in such Protestant strongholds as England and this country. Again: they say the Turkish power was to be broken in the summer of A.D. 1840, and for the result they refer to the interference of the Allied Powers, at that time, in the political affairs of Turkey. But Turkish independence no more ceased then, than French independence ceased, when the same Allied Powers did more violence to France, invading her capital, and giving her one monarch in the place of another. And when our missionaries are quoted as saying that the Ottoman strength is waning, it is no doubt true, but as much has been true for many years, especially since the Greek Revolution. Once more: according to the same scheme, the gospel would have been by this time published among all nations, unless that work is to be done in a few months, which I believe is not expected. But in the looser sense of this language, as long ago as the days of Paul the gospel was preached "in all the world," "to every creature which is under heaven," (Col. i. 6, 23.); and in that sense it was not the sign supposed; while in the stricter construction, the prediction is not yet fulfilled, and in that sense the supposed sign fails. Not to dwell on other instances: if time already disproves a theory, as to these preliminary events, can the same theory be trusted as to the end? And how can men be instructed, if in spite of mistakes already demonstrated, they will have it that they are "the wise," who "understand?" Even if the Providence of God should teach us nothing more, let us learn from it at least our present ignorance of the time of the end.

I leave the subject before you with two reflections.

If it is not for us to know the times or the seasons, *we shall do well not to agitate questions of this nature.* If such knowledge does not belong to us, neither is it our business to seek such know-

ledge. The search is not, in every sense, fruitless; for, in attempting to learn what is not revealed, we can easily form opinions, we are likely to embrace theories, which must only take their place sooner or later with the exploded errors of the past. Nor should such a theory be reckoned harmless. This specification of the particular time, especially as being literally near, attracts more attention, and produces a more positive present effect, than all the other doctrines propagated with it. When it fails of fulfilment, the failure must be felt accordingly. A vain expectation, once shown to be such, recoils on him who holds it, and when held in the name of the Bible, it tends to dishonor that book. Precise predictions on this subject cannot be proved true, because the Bible does not authorize them, and therefore they ought not to be encouraged. Nor ought they to be encouraged if they happen to be true: for we cannot know their truth; God has not communicated such information commonly in other instances, nor yet in this; and so far as we can judge, it is not desirable for mankind. On this subject, perhaps more than most others, theories confidently maintained, and turning out mistaken, cannot but tend to mischief. Not only their advocates suffer from defeat, but even their opponents from success; and both suffer from the feverish excitement of such a conflict. Every unauthorized prediction, in proportion to the credit it obtains, wearies and perplexes good men, diverts attention from the fundamental and evident truths of the Gospel to doubtful speculations, encourages restless curiosity in the place of active benevolence, tampers with the credit of all prophecy, and gives a new weapon to the scoffer. If now there are any who would so connect their schemes with the Bible as to make its authority stand or fall with them in the eyes of others, let all who study and revere this book protest against the presumption. If, on the other hand, any are disheartened, as though in these days, under the assaults of misguided zeal, and the fluctuations to which human judgment is ever liable, the faith of the church on this and many other topics, were loosened from all its foundations; let them remember that this faith has survived fluctuations and assaults greater than all these; let them "both hope, and quietly wait, for the salvation of the Lord." Amidst moral as well as physical commotions, remember that he knows how to bring good out of evil; that in regard to the prophecies, as well as other portions of the Bible, "there must be heresies," "that they which are approved may be made manifest;" that mistakes which are otherwise pernicious, may yet serve to establish sounder principles of interpretation; that as one prediction after another, concerning the time of the end, is proved to be mistaken, we have new proof that it is not for us to know that time. This divine superintendence we do well to remember, when we witness the haste and confidence of others, crying, "Lo, here!" and "Lo, there!" as though the kingdom of God were coming now "with observation;" yet let us not join with them in the evil of their experiments, nor wait to be convinced by the result, but rather obey the lesson we have learned from our Lord himself, the lesson con-

firmed by so many experiments already, that it is not for us to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

Finally: *It becomes us to live in habitual readiness for the end of our probation.* Whenever the present dispensation may terminate, and however the glorious reign of Christ may be ushered in, there is a temper of heart and a way of life which may prepare the living for that day, while yet they cannot learn its date; just as there is a preparation for death, which depends not on any knowledge of its approach. And since, for every individual, probation ends with life, as truly as with the present world's existence, he who is prepared for the end of his own life, is prepared for the end of the world. To live as seeing God, under the influence of things unseen and eternal, in repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, doing good as we have opportunity,—this is the urgent business of us all. To lead us by his Spirit thus to live, is the plan of God, both in what he discloses and in what he conceals. Thus let us be "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Then, if the day of judgment be ushered in to-morrow, will it come for us too soon? But without this preparation, though that day should be deferred a thousand years, who among you can be safe? For aught that appears, all that is left of your probation may not reach to that event whose date you are curious to learn. The trump of the archangel, if it were soon to sound, might reach your ear only in the dust. For you, time, if not near its own end, may yet be measured, not by years, but by months and days. While many have been inquiring when probation will cease, with a great multitude it has ceased already. If I were to tell you who make up this assembly, that death is at your door, according to the common course of God's providence I should speak a momentous truth to some here present. If the same thing had been said, a few weeks since, to the congregations in this city, it would have been a truth not merely to an aged man here and there, already stooping to his grave, but to a group of young men, of whom it was scarcely thought that they could die. Oh, let us be affected, not only by the opening graves, and the rising dead, and the descending Judge, that are yet in prospect, but by the graves now sealed and silent, by their young, unexpected tenants, and by that world of spirits which is already thronged from ours, and seems to overshadow us with their awful presence. My hearer, whatever may be the times or the seasons which the Father hath determined, prepare to meet thy God, in death, in judgment! Be ready for the bidding, for the presence, of thy Savior and thy Judge!

THE SPIRITUAL SEEDTIME.

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."—HOSEA x., 12.

"ANOTHER season has just passed away, if we speak in reference to the fruits of the earth; but if we have in view the supply of food for the mind and soul, it is more proper to say that the season has just commenced. The summer brings forward the harvest of the field, but the late autumn and the winter bring the months of reflection, and the richest harvests of the intellect and the soul. Now, therefore, that the sultry days of summer are over, and autumn has come, with its cool and bracing air, its falling leaves, its fading verdure, and the serious and contemplative influence which it breathes over the soul, the question ought to arise with every one, What progress is the Redeemer's kingdom to make in my heart, and in the circle in which I move, during the months which are to come? As the family gathers together once more from the green fields and out-door occupations of summer, to the duties and pleasures of the home and fire-side, what influence, what feelings, what enjoyments are to reign in the re-united circle? Is our community to go on, pervaded by a cold, worldly, irreligious spirit, or is an influence from above to descend, awakening holy joy and peace in these hearts, bringing penitence for sin, ardent love for God, the glow of benevolence, and the delights of prayer and praise? Is the church to remain as it is, or is it to be doubled and trebled during the approaching winter? Is religious feeling in the hearts of its members to continue cold, and formal, and meagre, or is it to be awakened to a warmer glow of gratitude and love, and deeper desire for spiritual blessings, and for more complete and happy union with God?

And you hath he quickened, [that is, brought to life], who were dead in trespasses and sins. Read Eph. ii., 1—10.

"The truth here taught is this:—Man, in his natural state of sin, is morally helpless and dead. When in this condition, God, sometimes, from pure unmerited mercy, takes compassion upon him, and awakens within him, by what is actually called *creation*, a new life,—i. e., new feelings, new desires, new motives of action,—and so directly are these new principles the results of God's agency in the human heart, that the being who possesses them is, with special reference to these holy principles, the very workmanship of God, *created unto good works*, in consequence of a previous determination on the part of his Maker that he should be the subject of such a change.

"The mind which really understands and grasps this passage is overwhelmed with the solemn reflections which cluster around it. What? Is man really, in his natural state, *helpless* and *dead*, in trespasses and sins? Is there nothing within him which can originate life, no seed in his heart which may, by his own cultivation, spring up and clothe the desert of the natural character with verdure? Is the heart given up

to hopeless abandonment, to be the prey of eternal sin, unless some power from above interposes to save it? There are in our families, our neighborhoods, our congregations, hundreds, in whose bosoms love for God as a controlling principle of action, has not found a place; but principles and passions which God pronounces to be sin, reign there, and hold entire control, though with greater or less degrees of restraint as to their outward exhibition. Now, are these individuals really helpless and hopeless victims to this slavery? Are the circumstances and condition of their hearts such that it is certain, that if left to themselves, they will still go on in sin, continuing for ever under its bondage, and suffering for ever its pains?

"The doctrine that man is not quite dead in sin is the most popular doctrine. We do not mean that any class of evangelical Christians really maintain such an opinion, but our hearts have all a constant tendency to sink insensibly into it. We *lose sight* of the truth, which, when our attention is really called to it, we are compelled to admit and believe. We are always willing to acknowledge that we are sinners,—and even that we are hardened, stupid sinners,—we will admit that we are *asleep*,—that we are in a *lethargy*, in a *swoon*,—anything but *dead*. DEAD! It is an awful word when applied to the body, but there hangs over it a tenfold gloom when it is employed to describe the condition of the soul. We want to have the means of resuscitation and recovery within. We are willing to admit that we are in prison, no matter how dark and how gloomy is the dungeon, but we must keep the keys ourselves.

"Yes, the human heart, especially if it feels that it is in danger, shrinks from the admission of its entire and helpless moral dependence upon God. It wants to find some life in itself; or at least some spark of a living principle, which it can fan into life. If, then, the churches of our land expect to be revived, and refreshed, and multiplied, during the approaching winter, they must look to God for it;—really and honestly look to God. Every Christian, whatever may be his theory, knows and feels his dependence on God as a fact. He is glad to be reminded of it; and if he seems broken-hearted and submissive to his Savior, seeking help from above, he is in the right frame to expect a blessing upon himself and others.

"How then shall the members of a church obtain this spiritual blessing during the coming season?

"1. The church which desires to be watered from above, ought to bring to an end all its contentions and quarrels. It is probable that the greatest of all the hindrances to the spread of religion in our land, is contention.

"2. Let every individual Christian *explore* and *confess* his sins, and renew the consecration of himself to God's service. Think what the real nature of God's service is, and what is the actual spirit which ought to regulate it. Let every Christian, then, who desires a revival of pure religion around him, look into his heart, scrutinize its principles of action, and bring himself to the right place before God, and to the right feelings in reference to man.

"3. The pastor of a church himself may often err in this respect. There are so many other inducements to lead him to wish for a revival of religion in his congregation, besides the simple desire to promote the holiness and happiness of the human soul, that his heart is exceedingly prone to go astray.

"4. The work which is done, too, should be done in the right manner. There are two very common errors which men fall into in their efforts to promote the salvation of others. One is, to imagine that the Spirit of God is to do all in the work of conversion, and to make accordingly little effort really to reach the intellect and conscience of the sinner, and to adapt, by ingenuity and skill and careful study of human nature, our efforts to his condition. A great many Sabbath School teachers err exactly in this way. They imagine that the Holy Spirit has the whole work to do, in the conversion of children; but as He works only through the truth, they employ themselves in bringing the truth to bear upon the soul, without much consideration as to the way of doing it. New affections and new acts will not come, unless the Holy Spirit supplies the spiritual life by which alone they can be performed. Hence, with all our ingenuity, and energy, and zeal, there must be entire and humble dependence on God; the spirit which would say, God grant repentance and salvation to these lost souls.

"5. This view of the subject is particularly worthy of the consideration of Christian parents, in their efforts to promote the religious welfare of their families. A vast proportion of Christian parents not only do not exercise much skill or dexterity, in endeavoring to awaken religious feeling in their children's hearts, but they do not seem even to imagine that there is room for any. They teach lessons, and impose restraints, and require external duties; and this is all. They think the Spirit must do the rest. Now this would be right if it were true that the first feeling of penitence and love were to be the penitence and love of the Spirit, and not of the child. But it is not so. That little child is to be led to be *itself* sorry for its sins; it is *itself* to love its Maker, and to engage in his service. The spiritual life by which right feelings must be exercised, must be from above. Feel this. Let it humble your spirit while you are at work, and animate it while you are at prayer. It has often been remarked by a pastor who has spent a long life in the experience of the Christian service, that he has never once made the effort to awaken religious interest around him, *in the right spirit*, without success. Persons very often attempt this in the *wrong* spirit, and their efforts result in total failure; but it may be doubted whether a Christian in any sphere of duty, whether the pastor or the humblest member of his flock,—teacher or pupil,—parent or child,—if he shall really humble himself before God, confess his sins, return to his own individual duty, and then sincerely pray for a blessing upon others, and go forth to the work of doing what he can to promote the Savior's cause, will be allowed to labor without success."